



FISH ART by RICHIE GUDZAN

The Coosa River is known for its exceptional bass fishing. Four of the seven Bassmasters Classics hosted on the Coosa sit in the Classic top ten total heaviest weight records of all time. The Alabama Bass (*Micropterus henshalli*), known amongst anglers as the Coosa River Spotted Bass, is considered **one of the meanest fighting black bass in the nation.**

Artist Richie Gudzan of Paddle Out created this print with a *M. henshalli* caught on the Coosa River with the goal of raising awareness about the special fish. See how he created the art at coosariver.org/spot.

The t-shirts are available for purchase at **Deep South Outfitters** in Birmingham, **Coosa Outfitters** in Gadsden and online at coosariver.org/shop. Fine art prints will also be available for purchase online. Wear your support for Coosa Riverkeeper with this Spot on your back!



Above: the gyotaku fish print of the Alabama Bass
Below: These great t-shirts are available for purchase

8-year-old Jack reeled in the biggest bass at one of our recent tournaments. Read on to see why he wants to tell polluters to "STOP!"

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THIS JACK KNOWS

This is Jack. Jack is only eight years old but on June 1st he won the **YakAttack Best Bass** and **Alabama Outdoors Best Young Angler** awards at our 2013 Logan Martin Open of the [Coosa Canoe & Kayak Fishing Tournament](#), embarrassing nearly 30 grown men in the process. We caught up with the young fishing phenom at school one day. Here's what he had to say:

Coosa Riverkeeper: How long have you been fishing?

Jack: Ever since I was two or three.

CRk: What's your favorite freshwater fish to catch?

Jack: Spotted Bass.

CRk: Have you ever been in a fishing tournament before?

Jack: No, this was my first tournament ever. It was cool because I thought it was going to be canoes vs. bass boats.

CRk: Tell us about how you caught that huge bass (*on the front cover*).

Jack: It was a crazy bass. First thing I said was that my line was hung on the bottom [of Choccolocco Creek] and then it swam under the bottom of the boat and jumped on the other side. When I got it into the boat, I knew it was a good fish... longer than any fish Dad caught that day!

Paul (Jack's dad): He had never netted a fish before. I enjoyed this experience with my son and I'm thankful for Coosa Riverkeeper and the sponsors for putting on this event.

**"This fishing tournament was the invite we needed to experience the Coosa."
-Jack's Dad, Paul**



Jack screams in excitement as he nets an 18.25" bass on Choccolocco Creek

HOW TO CATCH FISH

CRk: Who is the person, dead or alive, that you'd most like to fish with?

Jack: Bill Dance.

CRk: If you could say anything to polluters what would you say?

Jack: STOP! (*for the record, he yelled it so loud it startled us*)

Now, try to guess what Jack wants to be when he grows up? A professional bass fisherman! He's already looking into scholarships. He's off to a good start as he placed 6th overall in the **BlackJack Lands Angler of the Year**.

That's the highest score of any competitor fishing in only two stages! And his father Paul? He finished 4" behind Jack in 7th.

The Coosa Canoe & Kayak Fishing Tournament provides the opportunity for young anglers and their families to connect with the Coosa and one another while creating lasting memories and learning lessons in conservation.

Right: Jack hoists a nice Largemouth below Jordan Dam at the Coosa Classic
Below: Jack and Paul paddle through Moccasin Gap at the Coosa Classic



CATCH. photograph. RELEASE!

Saving bass one CPR tournament at a time.

At Coosa Riverkeeper's charitable [Coosa Canoe & Kayak Fishing Tournament Series](#), a lot of things are different from what you expect at a bass tournament. For one, the anglers don't even care how much the fish weigh. Then, there are no motors to be found on any of their boats. Finally, when anglers come to "weigh in" their stringer, they don't even bring the fish. No... there's no hog-raising, trophy-lifting celebration as the hometown hero steps up to the scales on the trailer. Instead, each competitor hands a memory card from his or her camera to our judges and patiently waits to hear how many inches their bass scored.



Young Jack's 18.25" hog from the Logan Martin Open

In a traditional bass tournament, bass are stressed from excessive handling, sitting in livewells for long periods of time and being displaced from where they were caught. **Mortality rates can be as high as 95% at a poorly-run bass tournament** on a hot summer day. But competitors in our tournament save lives by giving bass CPR: Catch. Photograph. Release.

Our anglers are certified in CPR. First, **Catch** the fish. Then lay the bass on a ruler and **Photograph** it, and then **Release** it right back in the water where it came from. All in less than a minute. Later, the judges look at the photographs and award scores to competitors in inches. **Not only do the anglers with the biggest catches win, so do the bass who escape the sporting competition relatively unharmed.**

Learn more and get ready for next year at coosakayakfishing.com!



2013 Coosa Canoe & Kayak Fishing Tournament Series

BlackJack Lands Angler of the Year: Josh Tidwell, 142.25"

Runner Up: Jason Cole, 123.25"

Neely Henry Open | March 30th

Stage Winner: Greg Alred, 47.25"

Logan Martin Open | June 1st

Stage Winner: Tim Perkins, 51.5"

Coosa Classic | October 26th & 27th

Stage Winner: Jeremy Meier, 62.75"

THE TRAIL AHEAD 2014 Tournament Series includes:

Lay Lake Open | April
Coosa River Whitewater Festival | May
Neely Henry Open | June
Logan Martin Open | September
Coosa Classic | October

THIS YEAR:

Total Anglers

56

Total Fish Scored

136

Total Length

1,846"

Average Length

13.5"

CLEAN FISH, HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

There are [15 fish consumption advisories](#) on the Coosa River for PCBs and mercury. Coosa Riverkeeper believes the ancient pastime of going down to the river **to fish for supper is a basic human right**. Since that right has been violated by pollution, we at least want to ensure fishermen are aware of consumption advisories. Coosa Riverkeeper staff have surveyed fishermen on the river to determine awareness levels of the advisories. Though our research is not yet complete, so far we are shocked to find **very few subsistence fishermen are aware that they may be consuming toxic fish**. Future work for us includes improving the advisories, which are published by the Alabama Department of Public Health, and helping spread the word so the residents of the Coosa Valley know how to safely fish for dinner. **Please follow our work on this important issue at coosariver.org/issues/fish.**

TAKING DOWN A DAM(N) WALL

Dams block fish migration, alter aquatic habitat and in-stream flows, and can have negative impacts on surrounding property values. In November, Coosa Riverkeeper assisted the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service in removing the 130-year old Goodwin's Mill Dam from Big Canoe Creek. [The removal action eliminated the only major blockage to fish migration on the entire length of Big Canoe Creek](#), an ecologically biodiverse tributary of the Coosa River. The project was initiated by Coosa Riverkeeper with partnering organizations [The Nature Conservancy](#), [The Friends of Big Canoe Creek](#), the [Geological Survey of Alabama](#), [Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources](#) and [U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service](#).



At the site of the former dam, Big Canoe Creek is free!

Become a member of COOSA RIVERKEEPER today!

using this form or online at coosariver.org

Select a level of membership that matches your commitment:
Your membership is 100% tax-deductible

- ☐ \$10-Coldwater Darter: a vulnerable fish that is found only in the Coosa.
- ☐ \$25-Blue Shiner: a threatened fish found on the Little River, Choccolocco and Weogufka Creeks of the Coosa.
- ☐ \$50-Pygmy Sculpin: a threatened fish found only in Coldwater Spring.
- ☐ \$100: Lacy Elimia: a threatened snail found only in the Cheaha, Emauhee and Wewoka Creeks of the Coosa.
- ☐ \$250: Southern Clubshell: an endangered mussel found in the Coosa, Cahaba and Tallapoosa Rivers.
- ☐ \$500: Green Pitcher Plant: a critically endangered, carnivorous plant found mostly in Alabama near the Coosa.
- ☐ \$1,000: Coosa River Spotted Bass: hands down the meanest fighting bass in the nation.
- ☐ Other Amount: \$_____

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