

# Ashley A. Whitt

Research Assistant-Texas A&M University at Galveston  
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## Education

2011 University of North Carolina Wilmington  
**Bachelor of Science in Marine Biology**  
**University Honors, Departmental Honors, and Cum Laude**

**Honors Thesis:** Interaction between shoreline stabilization and marsh thickness: an evaluation of key species and sediment characteristics in North Carolina's salt marshes.

- Honors Advisors: Dr. Martin Posey and Mr. Troy Alphin

## Research Experience

2012-Present **Research Assistant** Galveston, TX  
*Coastal and Wetlands Ecology Lab, Texas A&M Galveston*  
Mentors: Dr. Anna Armitage

- Native mangrove invasion into northern Gulf of Mexico salt marshes
  - Collaboration with Dr. Steven Pennings, University of Houston
  - Assessing which ecosystem services provided by coastal wetlands are most likely to be affected by the range expansion of black mangroves (*Avicennia germinans*)

2011-2012 **Marine Ecology Lab Intern** Dauphin Island, AL  
*Marine Ecology Lab, Dauphin Island Sea Lab*  
Mentors: Dr. Kenneth Heck

- **Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill**
  - Assessed impacts of oil on the recruitment of commercially valuable finfish and crustaceans in seagrass
- **Oyster Reef Breakwater**
  - Collaboration with the Nature Conservancy
  - Appraised effectiveness of oyster reefs abating shoreline erosion
- **National Gulf Shores Seagrass Assessment**
  - Surveyed the percent cover, SAV, and water quality of various seagrass beds across Florida and Alabama
- **The impacts of sea-level rise and eutrophication on *Spartina alterniflora***
- **Climate-related Ichthyofaunal Shifts**
  - Competition study amid lane, grey, and red snappers in mesocosms

- Black mangrove expansion into the Gulf Islands National Seashore: world climate change results in significant ecosystem changes
  - Collaboration with National Park Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Summer 2011 **Research Assistant**

Wilmington, NC

*Benthic Ecology Lab, University of North Carolina Wilmington*

Mentors: Dr. Martin Posey and Mr. Troy Alphin

- American Recovery and Reassessment Act
  - Deployed breeder traps to appraise the nekton use of oyster reefs
  - Sampled oyster population dynamics to determine recruitment to various created oyster reef sizes
- “To Seed or Not to Seed”
  - The effectiveness of seeding juvenile oysters on restoration areas
- Beach Profiling for Oil Baseline Project
  - Led field crews to collect infaunal samples across a beach profile in order to archive baseline samples

2009-2011 **Laboratory Assistant**

Wilmington, NC

*Benthic Ecology Lab, University of North Carolina Wilmington*

Mentors: Dr. Martin Posey and Mr. Troy Alphin

- Cooperative Institute for Coastal and Estuarine Environmental Technology Examination of Estuarine Shoreline Stabilization in NC
  - *Developed protocol for analysis of sediment grain size using Beckman Coulter™ counter.*
  - Managed data sets and analysis of infaunal samples, percent organics, and sediment grain size characteristics data
- Tidal Creeks Project
  - Monitor health of oyster reefs using PCR and oyster reef metrics.
- Cape Fear River Monitoring Project
  - Collaboration with the Army Corps of Engineers
  - Sorted core samples collected from Cape Fear River to assess impact of river dredging on benthic populations
- Spat Monitoring Project
  - Volunteer with homeowners on monitoring oyster spat settlement on deployed racks across NC estuarine coastlines

Summer 2008 **Laboratory Assistant**

*Environmental Engineering, University of Minnesota*

Minneapolis, MN

Mentor: Dr. Timothy LaPara

- Assisted graduate student investigating correlations between microbial communities in various wastewater ponds

## Research Funding

2011 Honors Research Supplies Grant, Honors Scholars Program, UNCW

## Presentations

Whitt, A.W., Posey, M., & Alphin, T.A. (2011). Salt marsh width impacts on representative sediment characteristics and key species in North Carolina. Undergraduate Research Showcase. Poster.

Whitt, A.W., Posey, M., & Alphin, T.A. (2011). Estuarine shoreline stabilization effects on sediments in North Carolina's salt marshes. CAA Conference. Hampstead, NY. Poster.

Whitt, A.W., Posey, M., & Alphin, T.A. (2011). Estuarine shoreline stabilization effects on sediments in North Carolina's salt marshes. State of North Carolina Undergraduate Research and Creativity Symposium (SNCURCS). Raleigh, NC. Poster.

Whitt, A.W., Nicolaysen, B., & Dorsey, S. (2008). Student resolutions to community conflict: Bald Head Island fox populations and sea turtle nests. National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC). San Antonio, TX. Presentation.

## Publications

Whitt, A.W., Posey, M., & Alphin, T.A. (2011). Interaction between estuarine shoreline stabilization and marsh thickness: an evaluation of key species and sediment characteristics in North Carolina's salt marshes. *University of North Carolina Wilmington Department of Biology and Marine Biology*, Thesis.

## Relevant Experiences

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|-------------|--|-----------------------|
| Fall 2011   | <b>Correspondence with various DISL labs</b>   | Dauphin Island, AL    |
|             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Bottom long lining trip with Dr. Sean Power's Fisheries Lab</li><li>• Surveyed marsh conditions behind breakwaters using RTK-real time kinematics with Dr. Just Cebrian's Ecosystems Lab</li></ul> |                       |
| Spring 2011 | <b>Bermuda Institute of Ocean Sciences</b>   | St. George's, Bermuda |
|             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Selected participant for course in Field Methods in Marine Ecology</li></ul>   |                       |
| Spring 2010 | <b>James Cook University</b>   | Townsville, Australia |
|             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Research trip to Orpheus Island Research Station for both Coral Reef Geomorphology and Evolution and Ecology of Reef Fish courses</li></ul>  |                       |

## Skills Set

- Department of Interior Motorboat Certification
  - Certified to operate small vessels
- CPR/AED and Standard First Aid Certification

- Rescue Diver, PADI Dive Certification
  - Oxygen first aid for scuba diving injuries
- Experience working and coordinating field crews
- Assessing community characteristics using: submerged aquatic vegetation cores, line transects, quadrants, oyster metrics, and vegetation counts
- Assessing nekton and benthic fauna using: breeder, pit, and crab traps, otter and beam plankton trawls, seine nets, and suction samples
- Experienced with oyster metrics: density, size demography, rugosity, and condition index
- Skilled at sorting and identifying infaunal samples from salt marshes and seagrass beds
- Familiar with the following statistical programs: R, CPCe, SPS, SAS, Sigma Plot

## References

- **Dr. Kenneth Heck**  
*Assistant Director, Professor*  
*President-Elect Coastal and Estuarine Federation*  
Dauphin Island Sea Lab  
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- **Dr. Martin Posey**  
*Professor, Departmental Chair Marine Biology and Biology*  
University of North Carolina Wilmington  
601 S College Rd, Wilmington, NC 28403  
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- **Mr. Troy Alphin**  
*Research Associate*  
*Benthic Ecology Lab Manger*  
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