

EDUCATION, OUTREACH, AND MONITORING AT BEAUTIFUL EAGLE CREEK IN THE CAMPUS OF GEORGIA SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY

Checo Colon-Gaud, Candace Moon, Aubrie Goodson, Ashley Deal, V. Byron Collins, Jamie Roberts, and Alan Harvey

AFFILIATION: Georgia Southern University, Department of Biology, Statesboro, GA 30458

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Beautiful Eagle Creek on the campus of Georgia Southern University has been a symbol of pride and tradition since legendary football coach, Erk Russell, mentioned its magical waters during The Eagles' championship run in 1985. Historically, Beautiful Eagle Creek has been envisioned as a symbolic staple of the successful program that practices near its banks, as well as inspired the name of business entities within the Statesboro community. Realistically, Beautiful Eagle Creek's near 500m stretch has remained no more than a drainage ditch with little to no aesthetic appeal, much less ecological health and biological integrity. As part of an interdisciplinary effort, the Georgia Southern University Freshwater Ecology Lab, the Center for Sustainability, and the Facilities Services division, in collaboration with several Biology courses (e.g., Aquatic Ecology, Fisheries Biology, Ichthyology, and Field Biology), have been working since 2015 to transform Beautiful Eagle Creek into a venue for K-20 education, community outreach, and monitoring programs that promote environmental sustainability, as well the ecological health and integrity of freshwater ecosystems in the region. To date, over 100 students have participated in education/outreach activities at the site and several courses have become certified in chemical monitoring procedures through a partnership with the Ogeechee Riverkeeper. Furthermore, Beautiful Eagle Creek is now registered as an active monitoring site through the Georgia Adopt-A-Stream network. In this presentation, we'll highlight the findings from our efforts at Beautiful Eagle Creek and one other nearby creek with a less disturbed surrounding riparian area (Lotts Creek). We will also discuss the progress made since the implementation of the monitoring program and registering the site with Georgia Adopt-A-Stream.

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