



## How Batson-Cook Built a Major Medical Facility While Protecting an Endangered Species

By Kevin Banks

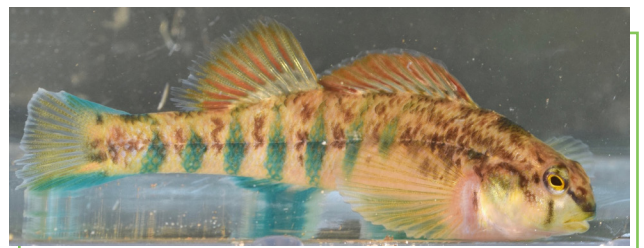


**“Protecting this species was a moral obligation, not a check box, and it demonstrates our dedication to quality.”**

When Batson-Cook broke ground on a new parking deck project for a key healthcare client in March 2024, it wasn't a routine assignment. While most industry professionals might view a precast concrete parking structure as standard fare, this one presented two significant, complex challenges that elevated the project to a case study in innovative construction and sensitive site management.

First, the structure was engineered to conceal its purpose from the street. To seamlessly integrate with the high-end medical campus aesthetic, the parking deck had to be visually disguised, designed to resemble a modern medical office building.

Second, the project demanded extreme environmental care. The site bordered a small creek, which serves as the habitat for a federally recognized threatened species called the Cherokee Darter. Building a major structure without impacting this delicate ecosystem required exceptional planning, specialized environmental controls, and a commitment to sustainability beyond typical compliance standards.



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The Cherokee Darter is a small fish, measuring only 1.6 to 2.6 inches, native to the Richland Creek system. The species is exceptionally vulnerable to even minimal disturbances. Specifically, silt and sediment runoff. These are a common byproduct of construction and can rapidly reduce water quality and jeopardize the stream's integrity. With the project necessitating the movement of four acres of earth immediately adjacent to this critical natural habitat, Batson-Cook recognized that standard erosion control measures would be inadequate. Successfully completing the parking structure required engineering a comprehensive, rigorous sediment and erosion control plan that guaranteed zero impact on the sensitive aquatic environment.

Batson-Cook engineered a solution that combined structural retention with precise water management. To accomplish this, the site required extensive modification. This involved substantial tree removal and reinforced



slope walls that were constructed along the north and west perimeters to build up the necessary elevation. Deep Shoring Systems were implemented on the south and east sides, utilizing a soldier pile wall (south) and a soil-nail wall (east), which allowed the team to safely excavate down to the required building subgrade.

Throughout the entire project, protecting the adjacent creek was paramount. To ensure effective runoff control, we integrated a sophisticated management system right from the project's start. An underground detention pond equipped with a water quality unit was strategically installed beneath the paved turnaround area on the northwest end of the site. This system ensures that all site runoff is treated to minimize sediment and pollutants.

It was important to think in advance for the continuous well-be-



ing of the Cherokee Darter. A new access road was constructed that features new curbing and guttering to ensure continued water management after we leave the project. Additionally, the project concludes with detailed landscaping, including sod, strategically placed shrubs and trees, and designated reforestation areas to ensure site stabilization and ecological recovery.

At Batson-Cook, our operations are guided by core values, one of which is that We Do The Right Thing. For this project, doing the right thing meant committing to the rigorous and often costly measures required to protect a threatened species, the Cherokee Darter, in a water system that most people don't know is there.

Protecting this species was a moral obligation, not a check box, and it demonstrates that our dedication to quality extends to the long-term well-being of the communities and ecosystems where we build.



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