



SALTY BYTES

The quarterly newsletter of the Saltwater Fly Anglers of Delaware

March, 2021 – June, 2021

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A Note from the Editor

As always, contributions of articles, comments, or pictures that I can include in subsequent newsletters are welcome. You can reach me at home (see above) or by email.

Due to the restrictions associated with the COVID 19 pandemic, there were no in-person meetings in 2021 until the May 8 Club picnic. The February, March and April Club meetings were conducted via Zoom. Many thanks to Jim DiDonato for making this happen and serving as our Zoom host. In addition, since January 9 our Club hosted Zoom fly tying sessions from 9-12 noon on Saturdays during the winter. These informal Saturday morning tying sessions were discontinued in April.

SFAOD Meeting March 10, 2021

Board members present were Jim DiDonato, Walt Clark, Bernie Stasko, Loretta Smith, Bill O'Connor, and Roy Miller. Club Treasurer Walt said that we have \$5,288 in our treasury. We still have tentative plans to have our annual picnic at Cape Henlopen State Park on May 8. Jim lined up David Bower of the TCO Fly Shop in PA to give us a Zoom presentation in June on Euro nymph fishing for trout. This Zoom program will be in addition to

our regular Club meeting which includes the Grand Raffle. Loretta Smith reminded everyone about the Club Pickerel Fly Fishing Tournament scheduled for April 10. Ten participants have signed up thus far. Bill O'Connor said we have 80 Club members to date including honorary members. He said that the White Clay Fly Fishers are accepting Paypal for their annual membership fee, something we should consider.

After brief reports from the Board of Directors, Jim DiDonato introduced our speaker for the evening, Chris Karwacki. Chris guides out of Chrisfield, MD. He grew up in a fishing family and has guided on the Susquehanna Flats in addition to the Chrisfield area. He began saltwater fly fishing in 2001 and cites Kevin Josenhans as his mentor. Chris is affiliated with Sage Fly Rods. The primary fish that he targets include striped bass, which start in April and continue biting through the summer and fall, spotted sea trout (specs, his bread and butter fish), bluefish, Spanish mackerel, and redfish (mostly puppy drum). He then went on to describe Tangier Sound which is a shallow-water fishery with good structure. His best spotted sea trout was 27" and the fishing has been exceptional recently. He likes to fish Fox Island also in 4-8 ft. of water along the sod banks and cut outs. He suggests fishing further out first and then moving onto the banks. He likes to use Clousers and deceivers. The specs arrive in May typically and they spawn from mid-June into July. Summertime is best for the specs. He uses intermediate lines more than others and likes his Clousers and deceivers in chartreuse or green. He doesn't use crab flies because the fish swallow them. He fishes out of a 23' Jones Brothers boat and likes to search out green water, the clearer the better. He suggests stern anchoring in shallow water when it is calm because the specs are sensitive to sound. His web address is <https://www.chesapeakeonthefly.com/>. His email is ckarwackijr78@gmail.com and his phone number is 443-722-1333.

April 10 – SFAOD Pickerel Fly Fishing Contest

The contest was held on April 10 and was open to any SFAOD Club members with access to a boat. The fishing was conducted in a State-owned pond of your choosing in Kent or Sussex Counties, DE. Five two-person teams competed from boats, and the tournament fishing hours were 8-2:30. The team Esox It To Me consisting of Roy Miller and Bill Douwes who filled in for Loretta Smith who was ill that weekend, finished in first place. Roy and Bill caught a total of 8 pickerel from 13.5"-20" for a total of 133 inches from Millsboro Pond, after getting a late start that morning. Second place went to the Old Farts of Ron Smith and John Lupinetti who fished Concord Pond, while the Dill Pickerels (Dr. Jerry Groll and Karen Blood) took third place. Jerry landed the largest pickerel, a 24 inch, also from Millsboro Pond. Ron Smith had the largest bass, a 14 inch from Concord Pond. There were a total of 22 pickerel, 7 bass, 5 black crappie, and 2 yellow perch taken by tournament anglers. Some of the black crappie were State citation size.



Here are Bill Douwes (left) and Roy Miller (right) with some of their winning total of 8 pickerel.

SFAOD Meeting April 14

The April meeting was conducted via Zoom and was attended by 28 Club members. Club Treasurer Walt Clark said that we have \$6,279 in our kitty and to date, we have over 130 members including honorary members. We are close to breaking even for what we paid for our Grand Raffle prizes, so everyone was encouraged to buy some raffle tickets from Walt. Next Wednesday evening will be our first fly fishing get-together of the season next to the pier at Cape Henlopen. Walt will grill some hot dogs for those who arrive close to 6 PM.

Our annual grand raffle is planned for the Club picnic at Cape Henlopen State Park on May 8. May 12 is a boat fishing trip to originate from the State ramp on the Broadkill to fish the Lewes/Rehoboth Canal and other inshore waters. We will meet at 0900. The White Clay Fly Fishers have cancelled their annual luncheon on White Clay Creek this April because of the pandemic. For our picnic in May, Walt will purchase individual bags of chips and all food will be handed out by one person to minimize exposure. Our June speaker is a trout guide from TCO Fly shop in Pa. Jim DiDonato has lined up an artist/fly fisherman from FL to be our September speaker. This will be a Zoom presentation. Jim wanted to know if anyone would be interested in joining a Club fishing excursion this summer to the Harrisburg/Marysville area of central PA to fish for smallmouth bass in the Susquehanna River. Since it is a bit of a haul from here for a day trip, it probably would involve an overnight or perhaps two evenings in a hotel/motel in that area.

Fishing Reports – Ron Smith said that a kayaker reported that there were schoolie size stripers in the Indian River Inlet, but that report was unconfirmed. Most of the fishing by Club members thus far in 2021 has been for shad at Concord Pond spillway and in the Brandywine River, and for trout and warmwater species like largemouth bass, crappie, and white perch. The shad fishing, in particular, has been good this spring for both hickory and American shad that are on their spawning runs. Club members also found white perch to be abundant in the Concord Pond spillway, and reported hooking the occasional small striped bass and northern snakehead.



Four Club members with American shad caught below Concord Pond spillway this past April. That's Roy Miller top left, Jim DiDonato top right, Bernie Stasko bottom left, and Bill Douwes bottom right.

Speaker – Our April speaker was Peter Douma who guides fly fishers out of Montauk, NY. He is a Coast Guard licensed charter captain and has been a member of the American Saltwater Guides Association since 2002. He has a Pathfinder boat and can go out as much as 30 miles including Block Island and Long Island Sound. He has three seasons that he targets: spring (late April to mid-June), summer (mid-June to early September), and fall (September until late November). In the spring he likes to fish when the water temperatures reach 50 to 65 degrees. In the daytime he likes sight fishing on the flats fishing shallower water on the outgoing tide and deeper water on the incoming. With regard to stripers he says there are three waves of fish, the Peconic fish, then Hudson River fish, and then Chesapeake area fish. The principle bait present includes bunkers (menhaden), longfin squid, grass shrimp, and silversides. There are lots of seals to compete with at that time of year.

In the summer there are bigger stripers, blues, and pelagic fishes like bonito and false albacore. Most of his trips are at night in the summer. The larger stripers are deep and require fast sinking lines to dredge them up from as deep as 50 ft. Sand eels become the most important bait as well as big bunker, snapper blues, small chub and frigate mackerel, and bay anchovy. Anchovies are the best bait in the fall. He uses a 10 wt. rod with sinking lines and an 8 wt. with floating lines. His largest flies are truly large at 12-18" in length. NY has a slot limit for stripers now, so fish larger than 36 inches must be released. There also are sea bass to be caught on flies and dolphin offshore.

In the fall it is baitfish blitz central for striped bass, bluefish, false albacore, and bonito. Bay anchovy are the preferred bait. The false albacore like the first light of day best and average 7-10 lbs. in weight. The presence of gannets signifies the presence of herring at the surface.

Captain Pete's phone number is 201-788-3337. His email is windwardoutfitters@gmail.com and he can be found at Gunfishing Marina. The expensive local lodging typical in the summer drops down to a more reasonable price in the fall.

Club Picnic, May 8, 2021

The annual Club picnic was held on May 8 at the pavilion next to the beach at Cape Henlopen State Park. The picnic was preceded that morning by an opportunity to fish from the beach next to the Cape Henlopen Pier. Club members, spouses, and friends convened around noontime to partake of the hot dogs, brats, and hamburgers being cooked on the grill by Walt Clark and Ron Smith. There was a good turn-out of members plus some representatives from the White Clay Fly Fishers at this event. Loretta Smith was in charge of handing out the food. Unlike previous years, members did not bring covered dishes from home in order to minimize the risk of exposure to COVID 19. There was a raffle of some door prizes that were donated, and most agreed that it was nice to get together in a fairly safe outdoor fashion. This represented our first official get-together in a non-fishing capacity since the pandemic started in March 2020. There was no business session conducted at this social event.

The Club boat fishing trip that had been planned for the morning of April 12 had to be cancelled at the last moment due to high winds. The plan had been to fish the Broadkill River, the Lewes and Rehoboth Canal, and the nearshore of Delaware Bay, but the winds made that impractical.



Club members check out the door prizes at our annual picnic held May 8, 2021 at Cape Henlopen State Park

SFAOD Meeting June 9, 2021

For the first time since the pandemic started we made use of the Rolling Meadows Club House for our June 9 meeting. This was our annual swap night event so members and guests who had fishing items to sell or trade put out their wares on the tables for attendees to look over and make purchases. While this was going on Walt Clark and Ron Smith finished up grilling hot dogs and hamburgers which were consumed inside because of rain. Once everyone had eaten, the business portion of the meeting commenced at 7:30 PM. Walt Clark led off with a Treasurer's report. We now have roughly the same number of paid members as we had prior to the pandemic, namely 117, with junior members and honorary members bringing the total up to 130. This is a notable achievement and shows the staying power of our Club even during a pandemic when we couldn't meet in person for over a year. Thank you to all who worked to keep the Club going and meeting regularly via Zoom. We now have over \$7,000 in our Club treasury. Tonight's Grand Raffle cost the Club \$1,100 for prizes that weren't donated, but ticket sales have resulted in a net profit for the Club of \$518. Walt announced that he has booked the pavilion at Cape Henlopen State Park for May 14, 2022 to insure that we get a preferred date in 2022. Fly tying items contributed by Captain Brian Waslovick's widow were offered for sale to members and guests. Profits will go into the Club treasury. To date \$58 was raised from the sale of these items, the remainder of which will be disposed of in a silent auction at the July 2021 meeting. Thank you to Jerry Groll for keeping these items safe during the pandemic.

Jim DiDonato reminded us that we are paying monthly for a premium version of Zoom so that there is no time limit on our virtual meetings. The membership agreed to keep the Zoom version active for the time being, especially since we will be having a virtual program later this month (June 23), and no one can predict whether the delta variant will cause another spike in COVID cases this summer and fall. The program Jim lined up for June 23rd will be given by David Bower of TCO Fly Shop at State College, PA.

Jim said that he is judging interest in having a Club trip to the Susquehanna and maybe Juniata Rivers in central PA to fish for smallmouth bass sometime later this summer. He envisioned that members could stay overnight at one of several hotels/motels in the Marysville area. As a Club event, this could take the place of driving to MA to fish at Martha's Vineyard. A PA fishing license will be needed for anyone interested in making this excursion to PA. Jim also wanted to know if there was an interest from Club members in making a trip to Montauk, NY for some beach fishing out on Long Island in September or October. There also are several fishing guides that operate out there, including our previous April speaker, Pete Doumas.

Member Dennis Lahiff reminded all that he is compiling an annotated list of guides from anywhere that are recommended by individual Club members. He has about 50 guide names and contact information so far. Bill

O'Connor volunteered to distribute an email draft of the unfinished guide so that folks can add to it before it is finalized.

Fishing Reports

Jim DiDonato fished the spillway of Johnson Pond which empties into the Wicomico River in MD. He caught a nice 28.75" striped bass and some black crappie in the spillway.



Here is Jim with his striper taken in the Johnson Pond spillway in MD.

Arthur Egolf has been fishing at Marion Station near Chrisfield, MD. He said that the fishing for spotted sea trout has been picking up. Clyde Seibert caught and released a 30" striped bass from the flats at the Cape Henlopen Pier. Rick Ranalli said that there are hickory shad in Canary Creek. Walt Clark reported catching 12 white perch from Swan Creek in MD. Club member Steve fished in a VA tributary to Chesapeake Bay and his brother-in-law took four small red drum on a spinning rod. Steve caught a small flounder on this trip. Ron Smith fished golf course ponds near Naples, FL on June 1. He caught big Mayan cichlids on flies and lost a nice 30" tarpon.

There being no more fishing reports or Club business, the Grand Raffle was held.





Loretta Smith had some luck on the Henlopen Flats.
Here she is releasing a small striper (top) on June 7 and a keeper size summer flounder on June 21.
Photos by Roy Miller

2021 Grand Raffle Prizes & Winners

1. Orvis Recon 9 wt. rod with matching Hydros reel, backing and intermediate line. – Ron Tatman
2. Orvis Clearwater 8 wt. rod. – Mike Orhelein
3. Lamson Guru 7+ reel. – Richard Beckstead
4. Lamson Guru 7+ reel. – Robert Chin
5. Orvis stripping basket. – Luke Ruckwell
6. Bernie Stasko's treasure chest of 100 flies. – Rob Lewis
7. Inshore 1/2 day fishing charter with Capt. Chuck Cook. – Mike Orhelein
8. Fishing trip for snakeheads in MD with Ted Morlock. – Brian Coleman
9. Pair of polarized Guideline fishing sunglasses. – Erick Cisneros
10. Pair of polarized Guideline fishing sunglasses. – Walt Clark
11. \$50 gift certificate from Orvis. – Teddy Egolf
12. A grizzly cape from Whiting Farms. – Robert Spain
13. 3/8 inch x 100 ft. West Marine Anchor Rope with Thimble and Whipped Bitter End. – Jerry Groll
14. Don Avondolio's book "Fly Fishing the Atlantic Coast". –Mike Orhelein
15. A SUB 714 Creek Co. belly boat w/ oars & air pump – Arthur Egolf

Speaker – On June 23 we hosted a Zoom presentation for members and guests given by David Bower of TCO Fly Shop in State College, PA. David had just returned from fishing for four days on Ambergris Caye, Belize. The subject of David's talk was tight line nymphing for freshwater trout, also known as Euro-nymphing, a method that has become popular on the international competitive trout fishing circuit. David has guided in CO, MT, and AK before returning to the State College area of PA. The term Euro-nymphing includes Czech, Spanish, Polish, and French nymphing, among others. What differentiates one form of Euro-nymphing from the other is the weight of the flies and the methods of deploying them. What makes these forms of nymphing effective is the relatively drag-free drift of the fly with little or no fly line actually in the water in order to make as natural a presentation as possible. George Daniel calls it "contact nymphing." David favors 10-11 ft rods in a 2, 3, or 4 wt. Most of the major rod makers offer them, including Orvis, Thomas and Thomas, G. Loomis, and Sage. The reels for Euro nymphing function mostly as line holders and to balance the longer rods. Rio sells pre-made leaders for Euro nymphing, although you can make your own. He likes Courtland Euro-nymph leader material. He uses 18-23 ft. long leaders that employ 2-3 ft. of sighter material and a tippet ring to connect the tippet to the rest of the leader. He doesn't use split shot to weight his flies and instead uses slotted tungsten beads and non-bulky flies tied on jig hooks to get them down quickly into the strike zone. Some of the general patterns he favors are Walt's Worms, perdigons, Frenchies, drowned ants, and even the familiar green weanie. He uses a level line so that the

line will not fall backwards through the guides when he is holding his rod vertically while following his leader downstream. David says that Euro-nymphing can be extraordinarily effective once you acquire the right equipment and get the hang of the technique, so effective that you don't want to fish behind someone who is good at Euro-nymphing.

Events scheduled for 2021. Most Club outings and fishing trips are yet to be scheduled. All outdoor events are subject to future COVID restrictions.

Jul. 14 – Outdoor Club meeting at Rolling Meadows Clubhouse parking lot with fly casting and grilled food

Aug. 11- Outdoor Club meeting at Rolling Meadows with fly casting and grilled food

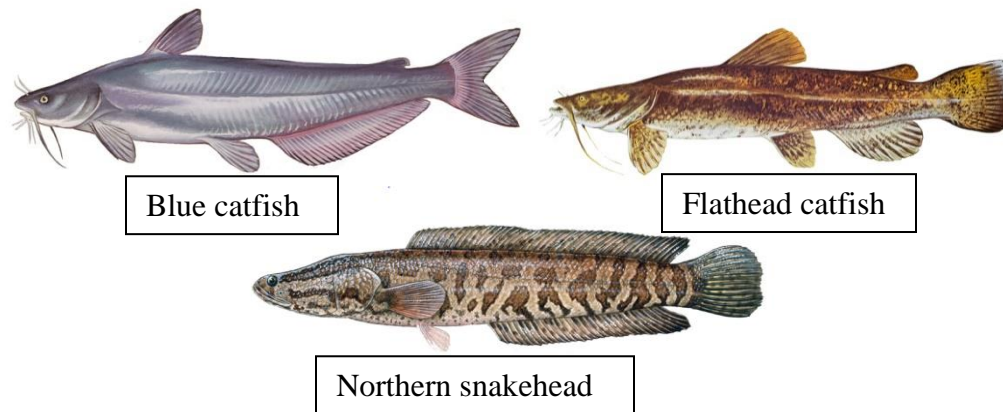
Sep. 8 – Regular Club meeting

Oct. 13 – Regular Club meeting

Nov. 10 – Regular Club meeting

Dec. 8 – Regular Club meeting with Roy Miller providing an update on Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission and Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council actions taken.

Biologist's Corner – Invasive Species



These artist renditions of invasive species were borrowed from the DE Division of Fish and Wildlife Fisheries Section website.

Almost everyone has heard the term invasive species. They are species which are here unsanctioned. In other words they were not purposely imported to Delaware unlike largemouth and smallmouth bass and rainbow and brown trout, but instead they made their way into Delaware waters without the permission of the State Division of Fish and Wildlife, either by illegal stockings or migration from neighboring states where they had become established. They may be species that are native to this country but live in other drainage systems or species that were imported from other countries.

By regulation, only the Division of Fish and Wildlife may stock fish into public waters in DE. Private citizens may stock non-public ponds, but if they wish to stock any species of fish that is not normally found in DE, they need to seek permission to do so from the Division of Fish and Wildlife. Such permission may or may not be granted, depending on the species and its life history, and whether the waters being stocked are connected to public waterways. More latitude will be granted for dug-out ponds that have no connection to public waters, although even then today's isolated waters can become tomorrow's pathway to public waters depending on rainfall and flooding events.

Once established, invasive species have the potential to negatively impact our established fish fauna and their habitat. An example of a habitat altering impact from a one-time invasive species is the common carp. Carp were

imported into this country from Europe in the late 1800s as a food source and quickly established themselves in slow moving waterways across much of the country. Carp never caught on in the US as a desirable food source except with a few ethnic groups, and they are notorious for uprooting aquatic vegetation and muddying up the water. It is only fairly recently that the sport fishing potential of the common carp has been acknowledged and embraced by some, especially fly fishers, in recognition that the fish is here to stay and it can be a strong, formidable quarry when enticed to take a fly.

So what are some examples of invasive species of fish now found and breeding in Delaware? Northern snakeheads, flathead catfish and blue catfish are officially recognized by the DE Division of Fish and Wildlife as potentially injurious invasives because they will prey upon and possibly out-compete established sport species. The flathead and blue catfish are American species that are here by range extension and probably unsanctioned stockings. Northern snakeheads are the most notorious of the three because they are an import from the orient and are aggressive predators that are tolerant of poor water quality, thus enabling them to invade just about any fresh or mildly brackish habitat. Hollywood exploited their establishment in this country by releasing a movie equating snakeheads with alien invaders that threaten to eat our pets and our children. In spite of these gross exaggerations I think it is safe to say that these invasives are here to stay, and their eradication appears to be improbable or impossible.

Some say since they are here, why not fish for them and make the best of their presence. All three species, especially flathead and blue catfish can attain very large sizes, thus making them one of the largest potential quarries in our freshwaters. Neither flathead nor blue catfish can be considered normal fly rod fare, but there is no reason why these big eaters wouldn't take a fly if you can get it down to their level and they can see it. Blue cats are most abundant in DE in the Nanticoke River system, while flatheads are most abundant in the lower Delaware. Both probably can be found in the C&D Canal, if not now, then soon.

Northern snakeheads, on the other hand, are embraced by some as fly rod targets as they are both aggressive predators and inhabitants of shallower waters that fly fishermen can access. They will take any fly that looks and acts like food and are known for explosive surface strikes in shallow backwaters when presented with poppers and deer hair flies that you would normally offer to largemouth bass and pickerel.

Advice from the Division of Fish and Wildlife is still evolving with regard to the disposition of your catch of these three invasive species. The Division of Fish and Wildlife still wants you to report the capture of the above three invasives and recommends that you kill them rather than release them. For more information from the DF&W visit the Fisheries Section website or request a copy of a recent brochure the Division printed on invasive species. This brochure includes a computer link to their reporting system.

Fortunately all three are very edible, so keeping them is not a hardship. Snakeheads in particular have a following among certain ethnic groups, which probably explains how they got to this country and to the state of Maryland in particular in the first place. Escapees from a private pond draining into the Potomac system probably were the original source of snakeheads in this area, and from there they have spread out on their own. Because of their sharp teeth, a heavy bite tippet or several inches of wire in front of the fly might be prudent. You can find them in the upper portions of the Delaware River, the Brandywine and Christina Rivers and in the Nanticoke system in Sussex County. They also are abundant in Becks Pond in New Castle County. Search out the uppermost portions of these drainage systems where the water is shallow, weedy, and stagnant. The existing all tackle DE state record for northern snakeheads is 12 lbs. 12 oz. caught by Bobby Smith in 2017.



That's Club member and snakehead enthusiast Ted Morlock on the left with a couple he took recently. In the center is Michael Harp with a snakehead from the Salisbury area in May of this year. On the right is Shawn Rakes with his first fly caught snakehead ever.

PHWFF

Club member Jim DiDonato has recently become the manager of the local chapter of Project Healing Waters Fly Fishing, an international charitable organization that uses fly fishing as an outreach to assist disabled military veterans. At one point, PHWFF was sponsored by our club, but now there is no formal connection – although several club members continue to volunteer their time.

Veterans don't need to have any fly fishing experience; PHWFF provides expert guidance and equipment. The camaraderie these veterans share through PHWFF is just as important as the fishing skills they acquire. The local chapter usually meets on the second and fourth Tuesday of each month in Milford. In addition, fishing events are held in local waters. Jim invites all SFAOD members to become involved as volunteers, and also to refer disabled veterans to him for possible participation in the program. His email is didonato57@gmail.com, and his phone is 302-270-4884.

Please Stay Safe

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This photo of Club members fishing on the beach next to Cape Henlopen pier was taken by Roy Miller on July 5, 2021. He also took the opening photo of a May 26 Club outing at Cape Henlopen State Park.