



Fisherman's Island near the
Bay Bridge/Tunnel taken by Jim DiDonato, September 11, 2021

SALTY BYTES

The quarterly newsletter of the Saltwater Fly Anglers of Delaware

July, 2021 – October, 2021

Writer/Editor: Roy Miller

On the internet at www.sfaod.com, our club message board is at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/sfaod/> For club-related questions, inquiries and suggestions, here is the **Board of Directors** contact information:

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Walt Clark - 610 937 9535 (waltsailor@comcast.net).

In September Ed Barry stepped down and was replaced by Bill O'Connor as President of the Club. Ed will continue to be a Club member and we all wish him the best of health and thank him heartily for his service to the Club as President and Board member.

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.

SFAOD Meeting July 14, 2021

Club members gathered outside of the Rolling Meadows Club House to practice fly casting in the parking lot. Walt Clark had picked up several pizzas for distribution to hungry Club members. Following this, a general meeting of the membership was convened inside of the Club House at 7:20 PM.

Board of Directors Reports:

Bill O'Connor said that we have 130+ members on our membership rolls, including honorary members. Steve Halstead said that he has numerous fly fishing books for sale. The list of titles available is our Club website. Dennis Lahiffe has been busy compiling lists of guides that various members have used over the years. Club

Treasurer Walt Clark reported that we had \$6,734 in the beginning of June and \$6,629 by the end of the month. Board member Jim DiDonato said that we are back to using mostly local speakers since we have resumed meeting in person for the first time since February 2020. Since Jim is our Club events coordinator, he asked how many of the Club members would be interested in smallmouth bass fishing trip to the Susquehanna River this summer? A few hands were raised. Jim requested ideas for other day trips or multi-day fishing trips. Jim said he is trying to line up FL guide Scott Graham to do a Zoom presentation to the Club in September, but he doesn't have confirmation of a date yet. It will have to be held on an off night since we tentatively have planned for an in-person Club meeting in September. Our present practice is to pay mileage for speakers who drive to our meetings and to pay for their supper as well. Zoom speakers will be offered a \$50 honorarium.

Fran Schwinn, a commercial crabber from Bowers Beach was a visitor to our meeting that night. Fran remembers Board member Roy Miller from back when Roy was Administer of Fisheries for the DE Div. of Fish and Wildlife.

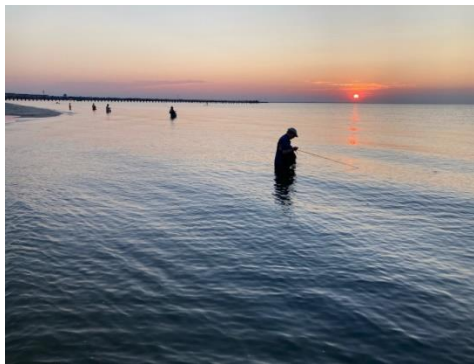
Fishing Reports – Ted Morlock caught five nice bass while fishing from a canoe near Vienna, MD. He caught no snakeheads, although there were a lot of other people fishing for snakeheads. Jim DiDonato fished the Marshyhope in MD twice recently and caught a nice snakehead on his first trip, but struck out on his second trip. Mac McNaught said he fished the upper Delaware this summer and found it packed with fly fishermen. Ron Smith fished today at the Point and found schools of snapper blues. He caught some using white bucktails on a spinning rod. Club members should look for the August issue of Beach Life magazine which features an article by Jeanne Shook about our Club that will include pictures of some of our members fishing along the beach near the Cape Henlopen pier. Roy Miller said that he and Bill Douwes caught some small weakfish and a kingfish on flies fished along the bottom while anchored and waiting for the 4th of July fireworks to start in lower Delaware Bay in Lewes.

Jim DiDonato stated that he has taken over coordination of involvement with Project Healing Waters out of Milford. Our role in this program as a Club has kind of dwindled recently. Jim wanted to know if the Club would consider making a donation to this organization? If so, any donation would go to benefit the small group of vets at the Veterans Hospital in Milford that we have worked with in the past. One member suggested we bring some of the vets to our annual dinner in January and give them an honorary membership for the year. Jim D. made a motion which was seconded by Frank Danner and approved unanimously to make a monetary donation from the Club to benefit the Milford Project Healing Waters group. Jim followed up with a motion seconded by Ed Barry to offer honorary Club membership for one year to the five active members of Project Healing waters and to invite them to our annual dinner in January. Should the ranks of their membership rise between now and January, we will put a cap on free memberships at 10. This motion also passed unanimously.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.



This is Austin Hammond with a nice sockeye salmon taken in July from the Kenai River, Alaska. Austin and his Dad Bob enjoyed some good fishing in AK this summer.



This photo of Club members along the beach of the Cape Henlopen Flats was taken by Roy Miller on Aug. 5.

SFAOD meeting August 11, 2021

Start: 6:00 p.m.

Board members present: Ed Barry, Walt Clark, Jim DiDonato, Loretta Smith, Bill O'Connor

Absent: Roy Miller, Bernie StaskoH

Program: Our program for this evening was outdoor fly casting. Frank Danner and Joe Helby were instructors on site. Thank you to Walt Clark and Ron Smith for preparing grilled hamburgers, hot dogs and drinks for the members.

Club Meeting: The meeting had 20 members in attendance with the business meeting starting at 7:10 p.m. We had three new members attend that evening: Mark DiDonato, (Jim's brother), George Levy, and Doc Schoch. Treasurer Walt Clark reported that after expenses for meeting supplies the Club has \$6,501.48. Members may obtain more details by contacting Walt. Walt announced that due to the rise in COVID-19 variant cases and the fact that the Association may close the club house, it is likely we will have to go back to Zoom meetings starting in September. The Board will inform the membership at the appropriate time.

Loretta Smith has Club flies available for sale. She encouraged new and current members to consider signing up for the November 6th Pickerel Fly Fishing Contest (note: this date has since been revised to Nov. 13). Loretta briefly described the rules for the event which will be held on public ponds in Sussex County DE.

Jim DiDonato requested that members let him know if they have any suggestions for speakers/presentations. Jim announced that there will be the Zoom speaker for September. He said the speaker is a FL guide and artist so this presentation will be a little different than most. If the club house is closed, the presentation will be on our regular club night. Otherwise, it will be on another night as a separate Zoom presentation. Jim also requested members to think about day trips which members could do, such as snakehead, red drum in Assateague, or others. He also stated he is willing to in make the arrangements for a trip to Harrisburg to fish the Susquehanna if anyone is interested. Also, if anyone is interested in a trip to Long Island – he will make the arrangements. Bill O'Connor reported that we have 143 members and Club email addresses seem to be working.

Dennis Lahiff announced that members submitted the names of 56 guides in and out of the country for the guide book he has created. This is the last call for more guides to be listed. The book will likely be emailed to members and not placed on the website since it was created for members only.

Announcements: Coast Day is cancelled again this year due to COVID-19. Ron Smith will be hosting the One Fly Contest on October 9th. He also will host a picnic after the event. Instructions will be emailed to the members.

Fishing Reports: The last Cape flats fishing on August 5 had 18 fly fishers present. Several members caught flounder, spot and croaker. Clyde hooked into a ray but it broke off before he could land it.

Jim DiDonato fished Roosevelt Inlet under the lights against the wall at the Coast Guard Station on the incoming tide. He caught 2 striped bass, 2 weakfish, and 1 silver perch, all on a white fly used with a sink tip line.

Nils Olson went on a guided trip (in Alaska?) and caught multiple king salmon on spinning gear

Loretta Smith fished the flats on the incoming tide and caught 2 spot, 1 croaker and hooked into a ray which broke off.

The meeting adjourned at 9:05 p.m.

Minutes compiled by Loretta Smith





In case you missed it, the August issue of Delaware Beach magazine featured an in-depth 9 page article on our Club. That's Loretta Smith casting on the opening page under the title Letting It Fly by writer Jeanne Shook with photos by Scott Nathan. Several other Club members are depicted or interviewed as well. In addition to the author and photographer, the Club wishes to thank publisher Terry Plowman.

SFAOD Meeting 9/8/2021

Start: 7:10 p.m.

Board members present: Walt Clark, Jim DiDonato, Loretta Smith, Bill O'Connor, Bernie Stasko, Ron Smith

Absent: Roy Miller

Program: Our program for this evening was provided by Bill O'Connor- Fishing for California Golden Trout; and Jim DiDonato-Catskill Fly Fishing Center and Museum.

Bill O'Connor went on a quest to catch Golden Trout in the Golden Trout Wilderness area which is near Sequoia National Forest in Central CA. He stayed in Bishop CA with his son and wife. He fished creeks near Horseshoe Meadows with dry flies and immediately caught a number of Golden Trout approximately 7 to 8 inches long. The area was quite scenic and remote.

Jim DiDonato and his wife, Tess visited Roscoe NY which is the epicenter of fresh water fly fishing. Jim fished the Beaverkill River with no catches. However, Tess caught a smallmouth bass on a spinning rod which Jim had set up for her. They visited the Catskill Flyfishing Center & Museum located in Roscoe. The Center is a refurbished old farmhouse which has everything fly fishing. They have on display old vices, antique reels; and displays of where different types of hackles originated from, sculptures, art, and an 1890 12-ft rod and a reel made from wood and much more. The Museum also has an Education Center which teaches rod building and other classes. The current class was making bamboo rods. The Center is well worth visiting.

Club Meeting: The meeting had only 9 members in attendance.

Board of Director's Reports: Club Treasurer Walt Clark reported that our opening balance is \$6,679.12 and after expenses \$6,633.56. Full reports are available by contacting Walt. Loretta Smith has Club flies available for sale. Jim DiDonato requested that members forward to him any suggestions for speakers/presentations at subsequent meetings, whether in-person or virtual. Jim proposed a fishing trip to the New Jersey coast to fish for false albacore and stripers from the shore. Members will be contacted via email with details of the trip to see how much interest there is. It could be a day trip via the Lewes ferry or a stay overnight. There was some interest from the Club members present.

Bill O'Connor stated that we have 134 members. Bill announced that the club president Ed Barry has stepped down as president and as a Board Member citing health and family reasons. Bill O'Connor volunteered to fill in as president for the remainder of the year and he also will continue to maintain the membership data. Ron Smith

volunteered to step in as an alternate board member so all board positions will be filled until the election in December. Nominations for the 2022 Board of Directors will be held in November.

Announcements: Ron Smith will be hosting the One Fly Contest on October 9th. Ron will host a picnic after the event. Instructions will be emailed to the members.

Fishing Reports: Jim DiDonato caught a blue runner on a fly at the Cape Henlopen flats. He also fished Roosevelt Inlet under the lights at the Coast Guard Station. He caught about 15 sub-legal stripers plus some weakfish. Ron Smith fished the Lewes/Rehoboth Canal beyond the bridge and caught some stripers during the day.

The meeting adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

From minutes compiled by Loretta Smith



This picture of a fly-caught summer flounder was taken by Jim DiDonato on Fishermen's Island, VA on Sept. 11, 2021



Here are a couple of pictures of Bernie Stasko with some whoppers he caught on the Club fishing trip by Delaware Bay ferry to Corson's Inlet in NJ on Oct. 5. From left to right they include a black sea bass and a Northern puffer (blowfish).

One-Fly Contest

The Club's annual One-Fly Contest was held on Oct. 23. The winner was Shawn Rakes, shown on the left, accepting from Ron Smith a bag of flies tied by the other contestants. All of the contestants are shown in the picture on the right. From back to front they include Shawn Rakes, Steve Halstead, Jim DiDonato, Walt Clark, Bernie Stasko, Bill O'Connor, Loretta Smith and Ron Smith. Shawn's winning entry was a 14.5" hickory shad caught from shore in Indian River Inlet. Second place was an 11.5" hickory shad caught by Jim DiDonato, and third place was a snapper blue caught by Walt Clark. Shawn also had the most fish (5).



SFAOD Meeting 10-20-2021

The October meeting started at 7 PM one week later than usual because of road re-surfacing at the Rolling Meadows development the second week of October. It was not a typical indoor meeting in that there was no business session to the meeting. Instead Board of Director members and other Club volunteers manned visitation tables where hands-on demonstrations were conducted that illustrated knot tying, leader and fly line rigging, fly tying, and fish identification. Compliance with mask recommendations was good and everyone in attendance became active participants. For the fish identification table, Roy Miller ran a Power Point illustrated quiz on identification of local fishes, with emphasis on identifying the frequently challenging members of the sunfish and bass families. Roy also had his extensive collection of fish identification books on hand for attendees to browse through. The informal venue for the evening seem to be well-received by the members and guests in attendance as everyone got to participate and learn from their friends and acquaintances. The November meeting will include nominations for the Club Board of Directors for 2022. Nominations from the floor will be accepted.



This incredibly beautiful longear sunfish was caught recently on a fly in Arkansas by Shawn Rakes.



This attractive photo of a freshly fly-caught striped bass on gravel was taken in Cape May NJ by Frank Lenik.





This collage of photos was taken on four separate evenings this September and October in the Lewes and Rehoboth Canal aboard Ron Smith's boat.

On the upper left is Roy Miller and Bill Douwes, upper right is Mike Orhelein, Lorretta Smith on the lower left, Ron Smith himself on the lower right, and Shawn Rakes on the bottom. All fish were released after their pictures.

Events scheduled for the remainder of 2021 and beginning of 2022. All outdoor and indoor events are subject to future COVID restrictions.

Nov. 10 – Regular Club meeting

Nov. 13 – Pickerel Fly Fishing Tournament on public ponds in Sussex County, DE

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

Jan. 7 – Club banquet and program at Lewes Presbyterian Church.

Jan. 8 – Resumption of Saturday of morning fly tying at Lewes Harbor Marina. COVID protocols may be in effect.

Feb. 9 – Regular Club meeting.

Mar. 8 – Regular Club meeting.



Northern searobin



Striped searobin

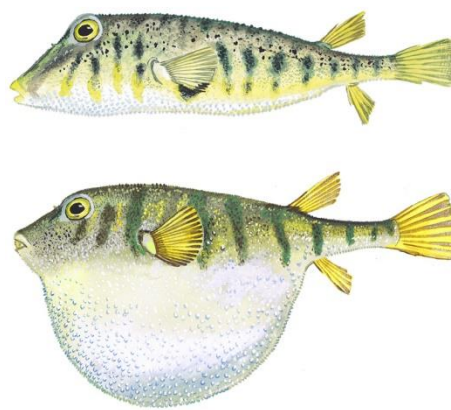
Biologist's Corner

I took the time recently to scan the titles of other Biologist's Corner articles I had prepared since 2009. Although I have covered just about every managed species that is or could be important to fly fishermen in our area, I haven't said much about some of the unmanaged species that still manage to take a fly on occasion. I will correct that

oversight with this column. Some of the unmanaged and underappreciated species that we fly fishermen still manage to take from time to time include searobbins, northern puffer or blowfish, and on the freshwater side, the fallfish and the golden shiner, both larger members of the minnow family.

We have two species of searobins in our area, the northern searobin (*Prionotus carolinus*) and the striped searobin (*Prionotus evolans*). Of the two, the larger ones (up to 20 inches long) usually are the striped searobins. Both are bottom dwellers, but will take a fly if it is presented in their window. Of the two, the striped searobin has a larger mouth and is more likely to target baitfish. Both are interesting fishes that have modified pectoral fin rays to stir up sand and gravel in their search for food. In doing so, they appear to be almost walking on the bottom. Although not targeted by fly fishermen, searobins are especially abundant off of Long Island, NY where they are frequently taken on flies. The posterior component of their pectoral fins can be spread out like a wing, thus giving them some built-in resistance to being hauled to the surface. They spawn from May to July in larger bays like the Chesapeake, and in the ocean during August and September. They are said to be edible, although I have never tried them before. They also are capable of making noise that you can hear from the surface if a school is passing by.

The principal species of puffer in our area is the northern puffer or blowfish (*Sphoeroides maculatus*). I have minnows while targeting other ways. They can take in water (or air from the water) and greatly expand and make themselves difficult or predators to swallow. This makes the flavor and texture, but in cleaning the liver or gonads as they may contain an edible flesh if you are careless. In the Pacific, this toxin is known as



area is the northern puffer or blowfish caught them on small Clouser species. Puffers are unique in several when frightened if you remove them special cavity near their stomachs to impossible for all but the larger them a favorite of small children who meat along the backbone has a good puffers, be sure to not nick open the toxin that can get on the otherwise some puffers in the Caribbean and the tetrodotoxin and can cause a zombie-

like state and eventual death for the unfortunate who ingests these tissues. Northern puffers were really abundant in the 1960s in the mid-Atlantic area. I can remember catching so many from the surf that I used to sell them to an area fish store for \$0.05/lb. They were marketed as “sea squab.” Their parrot-like teeth make hooking them on a fly somewhat problematic, but I have done it with both juveniles and adults. We have another larger species in our area, the smooth puffer (*Lagocephalus laevigatus*), but this different looking fish frequents deeper waters and never seems to be particularly abundant. As you can tell from its name, its skin is smooth in comparison to the prickled skin of the Northern puffer.

On the freshwater side, there are two members of the minnow family that will take a fly in a heartbeat, but are seldom, if ever, specifically targeted by fly fishermen. Of the two, the fallfish (*Semotilus corporalis*) is by far the largest, occasionally reaching 17 inches in length. I have caught them on both dry flies and nymphs, although more often on nymphs. They give a fair account of themselves when hooked and I have been fooled into initially thinking I was into a nice brown trout when instead I hooked a good size fall fish. They do not jump when hooked. They are abundant in the streams of the northern part of our state, like the Brandywine, the Christina, and their major tributaries. They are easily confused with creek chubs (which have a dark blotch on their dorsal fin) and sometimes inhabit the same waters. The fallfish is a native species and should not be killed as an undesirable “chub” just because you were disappointed you did not catch a trout. Some states consider the fallfish a game species.

Golden shiners (*Notemigonus crysoleucas*), also known as mill roaches in lower Delaware, like slow moving streams and rivers or still waters. Only the largest of golden shiners will take a fly. The rest of them serve as preferred forage for bass and chain pickerel. They can reach a size of 8 or 9 inches and are common in many of

our public ponds. They have been widely distributed by the commercial bait industry. The lateral line of these brightly-colored fishes dips noticeably downward just past the gills.



fallfish



golden shiner

The searobin, Northern puffer, and golden shiner illustrations were copied from the DE Div. of Fish and Wildlife Fisheries, Fisheries Section website and are illustrations painted by artist Duane Raver. I copied the fallfish illustration from a New Hampshire Fish and Game website.

PHWFF

Club member Jim DiDonato is 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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OUR LOCAL SPONSORS

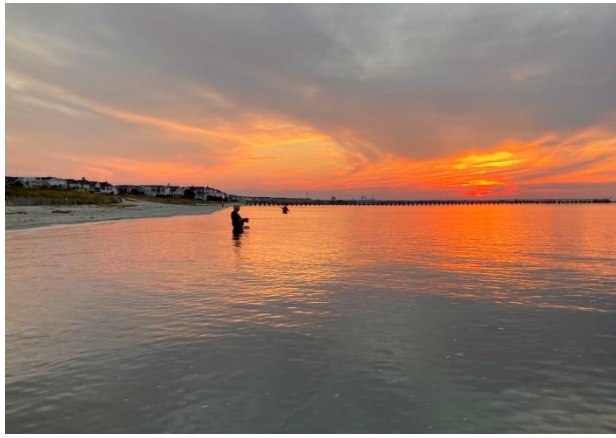
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- **LEWES HARBOR MARINA BAIT AND TACKLE**
- **CAPT. CHUCK COOK OF FIRST LIGHT CHARTERS**
- **CHRIS ERBY OF DELAWARE PADDLE SPORTS**
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This photo of Club members fishing on the beach next to Cape Henlopen pier was taken by Roy Miller on Aug. 5, 2021.