



SALTY BYTES

The quarterly newsletter of the Saltwater Fly Anglers of Delaware

August - October, 2020

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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 at the normal Club venue at the Rolling Meadows Clubhouse after the March 11, 2020 in-person meeting. Club meetings resumed in September via Zoom. Informal Zoom Club get-togethers were conducted weekly for the most part during the COVID restricted period, mostly on Thursday evenings, beginning at 8 PM. Many thanks to Jim DiDonato for making this happen and serving as our Zoom host. Anyone in the Club who wishes to tune in is encouraged to do so, and our Club is paying the monthly fee so that our Zoom meetings are not restricted to 40 minutes per session. Each week a Club-wide email is sent out that contains the hot link to click on for that week. If you haven't used Zoom before on your device (computer, ipad, or smartphone), follow the instructions for accessing Zoom. It's really easy.

Informal Club fishing get-togethers occurred every few weeks this summer and into October during evening high tide at the Cape Henlopen Pier parking lot. Fishing nights included Aug. 17, 31, Sep. 15, 28, and Oct. 26. The October 26 fishing event was in celebration of Halloween, so most members in attendance agreed to use black and orange flies. During the other evening fishing events, it was anything goes as long as you used a fly

and a fly rod. These evening fishing events typically attracted 12-20 Club members, all of whom liked the opportunity of re-connecting outdoors with friends while social distancing and getting in some fishing. Parks and Recreation officials recommended that masks be worn in the parking lot, and many complied, but this was not rigidly enforced.

SFAOD Meeting Sep. 9, 2020

This Zoom meeting started at 7:00 p.m. Board members present on the call included: Ed Barry, Walt Clark, Mike Collier, Loretta Smith, Bill O'Connor and I. The total number of Club members tuning in was 22. President Barry said that we need a speaker for our next Zoom meeting in October if anyone has some ideas. Member Ron Smith said that cobia have appeared off our coast, and they are working on large schools of bunker. Ron also said that Maryland law enforcement personnel have been arresting fishermen who fillet at sea species that normally have a minimum or maximum size limit. Member Jerry Groll said he has been catching weakfish off the Cape Shores Pier on Fish Bites.

Our speaker that evening was member John McMinn who presented a PowerPoint program about fly fishing for redfish. He said that redfish usually were not his primary target until fairly recently. He said that there are redfish tournaments that count the number of tail spots on redfish. He likes a Clouser deep minnow for fishing on deeper flats, but he said that reds also will take a popper off the surface. He stalks them into November on foot while sight fishing. In coastal areas like South Carolina and Georgia, the water usually clears when the fall weather cools down. Large, mature reds are most often encountered offshore. For these fish he might use a 550 grain or heavier sinking line. He talked about fishing in Florida on the Gulf side and in Louisiana which Lefty always said is the best red fishing on the planet. John uses a 20-30 lb. tippet as reds are not terribly leader shy. He prefers a moderate to slow retrieve for reds with suggestive flies in the marsh areas and big 6 inch streamers for larger fish out in open water. Some guides he recommends are John Kumiski, Rick De Parva, and Ned Smell in FL and Greg Moon, Al Keller, and Lucas Bisset in LA. (Since I am unsure of the spellings of these names, try a search on the internet if you want to contact one of these guides). He recommends Chico Fernandez book about fly fishing for redfish and for videos he likes Bulls on Top by David Mangum. The meeting attendees were grateful that John took the time to share his knowledge and experience with us while entertaining us with his slides.



Andrew Douwes, a friend of Roy Miller, had some luck with croaker and spot at Cape Henlopen during one of the Club's evening fishing sessions.



There were small stripers available in the Lewes and Rehoboth Canal this summer if you fished at night. Photo by Ron Smith.

SFAOD Meeting Oct. 14, 2020

The October meeting was conducted via Zoom and was attended by 14 Club members. A report was given on the October 10 Club One-Fly Contest. As in previous years contestants checked in at 0800 and donated two flies and drew one fly in a blind drawing. We met in the parking lot of the Rolling Meadows Clubhouse in Lewes. Members wore masks and were able to social distance while remaining outdoors. The only thing we couldn't do with masks on was eat doughnuts and drink coffee. Once you had drawn your fly, the rule was fish with only that fly in any marine shoreline accessible area of your choice in Delaware (no boat fishing) until 3 PM that same day. If you lost your fly early, then you were done for the day as far as the contest goes. Prizes were awarded for the largest fish and the most fish. Steve Halstead caught the largest fish, a 12 inch summer flounder, and Ron Smith caught the most (3 white perch and a small flounder). Both men drew Clouser deep minnows on number 4 hooks in the drawing in chartreuse and white colors. Many thanks to Loretta Smith and to Ron and Loraine Smith for running the registration table and putting out the refreshments so that members could help themselves.

In other Club business, Roy Miller reminded everyone that an updated-newsletter was prepared last month and it is posted on the Club's website. Loretta Smith reminded everyone that the Club fall pickerel fly fishing contest is still a go on Nov. 21. We will not be meeting after the fishing at an area restaurant like in previous years, so each contestant is on their own in regard to record keeping and reporting. Each two-person team may fish in any public pond in Sussex County, DE. Chain pickerel and largemouth bass are eligible species for this tournament. The winning team will accumulate the most total inches of pickerel landed on flies. Recognition also will be given to the largest bass taken on a fly. Walt Clark gave a brief Treasurer's report. Our Club had \$4,276.70 as of last month which has been reduced by Club expenses to \$3,710.12 after purchasing prizes for our annual raffle. The raffle from this year has been postponed until 2021. Tickets purchased in 2020 will be carried over into the 2021 raffle. Raffle prizes thus far include the following:

- 1st Place** – Orvis 9 wt. Recon rod, Hydros reel, and sink tip line.
- 2nd place** – 8 weight Orvis Clearwater rod
- 3rd & 4th places** – Lamson Waterworks Guru reels with extra spool
- 5th place** – Fiskar stripping basket
- 6th place** – 150 ft. of nylon anchor line with spindle from West Marine
- 7th place** – Orvis gift card

Additional prizes include: 2 pairs of fishing sunglasses, a snakehead fly fishing trip for one guided by Club member Ted Morelock, and a half day of fishing with professional guide Chuck Cook. The raffle probably will be held at the May picnic at Cape Henlopen State Park if conditions in 2021 allow.

We have 112 paid members at present in our Club. Ron Smith reminded everyone that we have to nominate a Board of Directors for 2021 at the November meeting and hold an election in December. It is likely that we will have 1-2 openings on the Board for 2021. These nominations and elections will be held via email so that everyone may participate. Anyone wishing to nominate someone or all of the existing slate of Board members for 2021 may do so in November either by email or during the November Zoom meeting. We still have a need for a speaker in November. Roy Miller will present an update on Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission happenings and rule changes at the December Zoom meeting. Roy also will show some fishing pictures from 2020.

Our speaker that evening was Tim O'Neill, owner with his son Tyler of O'Neill's Fly Fishing. Tim demonstrated how to tie a peanut bunker fly and an all-purpose emerald shiner fly using his Norvise setup. Tim is an owner of the Norvise tying system. The peanut bunker fly imitates a juvenile menhaden which is eaten by just about every predatory fish that swims in saltwater in our area. The emerald shiner pattern should be a killer for bass, pike, pickerel, and walleye and most other predators that frequent the Great Lakes area, including salmon and trout. Tim does a live Facebook event every Sunday night at 7 PM. A frequent guest on his show is young teenager Braden Miller who has his own fly fishing website.

Fishing reports – Jim DiDonato caught a number of fish recently on a fly fishing trip to FL including his first ever tarpon, crevalle jack, and mangrove snapper while fishing in Indian River lagoon. He also caught peacock bass (below right) and Mayan cichlid in the Ft. Lauderdale area, and also gaftopsail catfish and ladyfish (below left).



In Memorium – Long-time Club member **Roger Hone** passed away Oct. 15 at the age of 90. Roger was a U.S. Navy veteran and a career chemical engineer with the DuPont Company. He was a dedicated fly fisherman and wood carver and one of the first of our Club members to embrace the use of 2-handed fly rods. Roger will be missed by all who knew him.

Events still scheduled for the remainder of 2020

Nov. 11 – 7 PM Zoom meeting, member Jim DiDonato will speak about his recent FL fly fishing trip

Nov. 21 – Pickerel Fly Fishing tournament

Dec. 9 – 7 PM Zoom meeting, Roy Miller, speaker

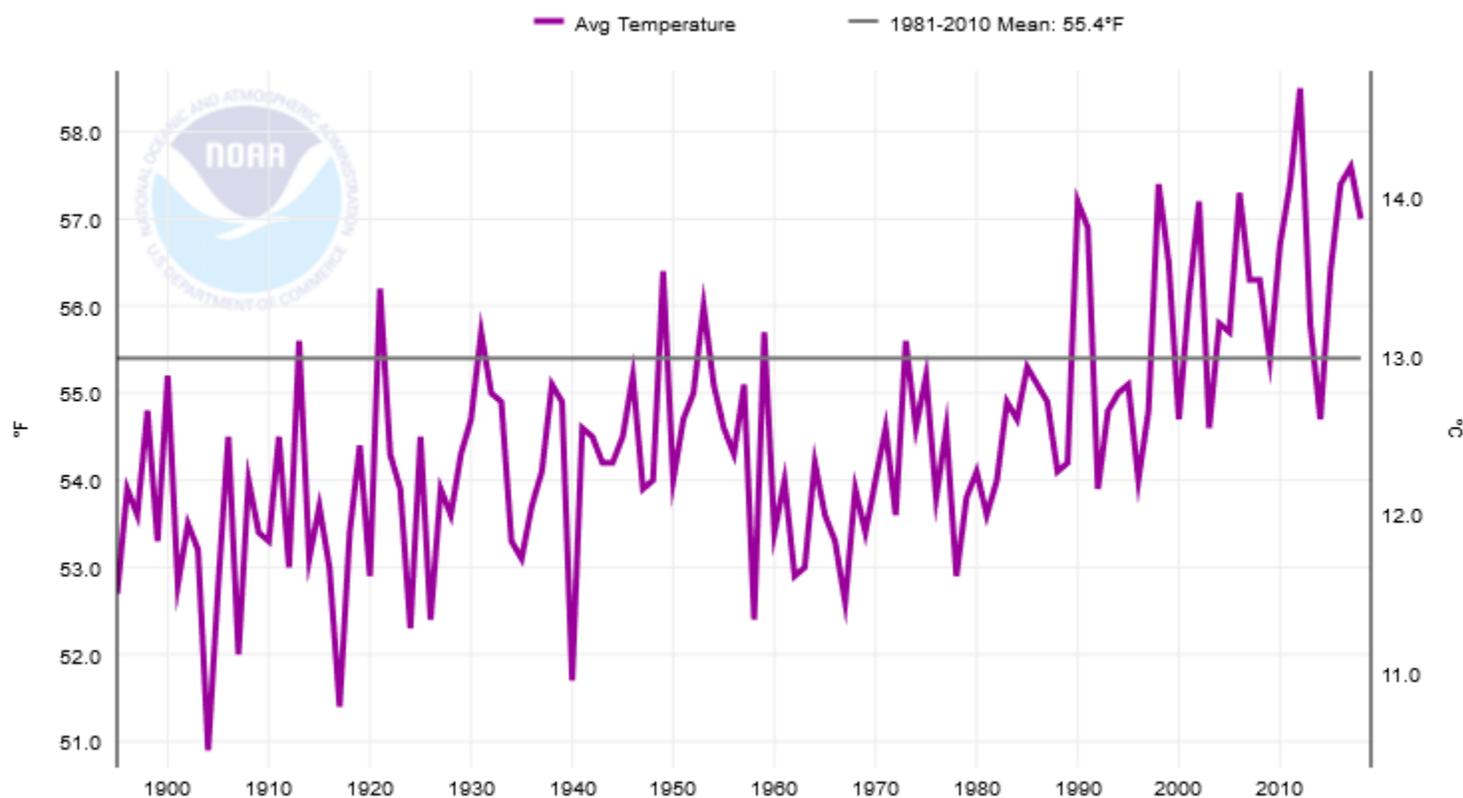
Dec. 15 – Cutoff date for results of 2020 Species Journal entries

In spite of the pandemic and the cancellation of pre-scheduled Club events, Club members have continued to fish this summer and fall. Fortunately fishing is one of those outdoor activities that can be enjoyed safely during a pandemic with reasonable common-sense precautions.

Biologist's Corner –

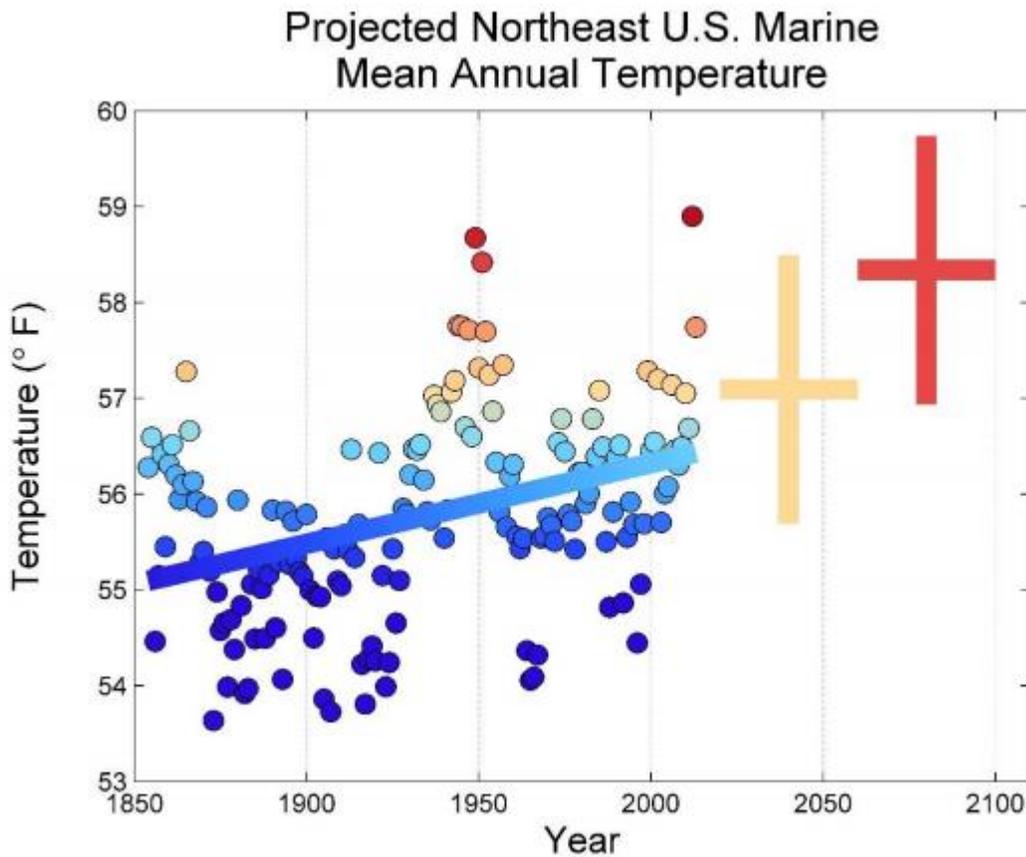
Regardless of our individual political persuasions, climate change is real and it is impacting our local fish stocks, and ultimately which species we sport fishermen will target and how and where we pursue them. Let's focus on Delaware and what we fishermen have been observing over the years. But first we need some data to back up our basic premise that on average, our climate is warming. Just look at the trend in Delaware average temperatures since 1895.

Delaware, Average Temperature, January-December



Source: Delaware average yearly temperatures from 1895-2019. Office of the Delaware State Climatologist, 212 Pearson Hall, Newark, DE 19716.

Then take a look at the past and future projections of mean sea surface temperature in the graph below and you get an idea of what to expect, if not in our lifetimes, then certainly in the lifetimes of our children and grandchildren.



Source: Dr. Jon Hare. 2014. Impacts of climate change on marine fisheries. East Coast Climate Change and Fisheries Governance Workshop, March, 2014. Washington, DC.

A year or so ago, recently retired marine fisheries expert and Club member Rich Seagraves updated our Club on climate change as it is affecting fishes along the Atlantic coastline. Rich mentioned the offshore and northward migrations of black sea bass and summer flounder that we have observed locally. So what else are we seeing and what recent evidence do we have at our disposal? Climate scientists tell us that the record number of hurricanes that ravaged our Gulf shores this year is related to climate change, as are the terrible forest fires on the West Coast and Colorado. But let's stick to what we fishermen have observed locally.

The inshore fly fishing scene gives us some clue as to what is happening. This summer we saw spotted sea trout, Florida pompano, and jack crevalle all being taken by our Club members on flies this summer during Club outings on the flats next to the Henlopen Pier on Delaware Bay. Aside from being somewhat unusual fly rod catches for Delaware Bay, what else is significant is that these three species are basically southern species. Their range extension into Delaware is hardly surprising when one considers the rising sea temperatures in Dr. Hare's graph above. Expect to see some of the same sort of thing for the foreseeable future as long as our coastline continues on this trend of gradual warming. Of course there will be individual variation in year to year temperatures. Even if water temperatures are cooler than normal next year, scientists tell us to expect the long-term warming trends to continue. So what else can we expect in addition to the three species just named? More red drum, juvenile permit, Spanish mackerel, cobia and any number of other southern species expanding their range northward as mean summer temperatures continue to rise? If you are like me, then you certainly hope so, especially for red drum, spotted sea trout and cobia. One can only hope that more southern species will move in to fill the vacant niches

left open by migrating summer flounder, black sea bass, and perhaps even large striped bass. If I had to lower my expectations for each of these three traditional mid-Atlantic sport fishes, then the thought of more access to red drum, spotted sea trout, and cobia certainly would be something to look forward to.



Spotted sea trout caught by Bill O'Connor.



Pompano caught on a fly by Roy Miller near the Cape Henlopen Pier this August.



Jack crevalle taken on a fly by Roy Miller near the Cape Henlopen Pier this past August.

PHWFF

Our local Project Healing Waters Fly Fishing liaison is Mike Nichols. His email is mp-nich613@comcast.net, and his cell is (302) 242-0238. Project Healing Waters Fly Fishing is a Club-sponsored program and all club members are invited to help with this exciting and rewarding program. Normally the group meets the second and fourth Tuesday of each month at the Masonic Lodge #9 Building, 125 Causey Avenue, in downtown Milford. However, because of COVID 19 concerns, recent meetings have been conducted via Zoom.

Please Stay Safe

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The opening shot taken September 18 is entitled “A loon decides to join the Club.” The closing shot of the Henlopen Flats at dusk also was taken during the Club outing September 18. Both photos were taken by Roy Miller.