



SALTY BYTES

The quarterly newsletter of the Saltwater Fly Anglers of Delaware

April, May, June 2019
Writer/Editor: Roy Miller

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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.

Apr. 6 – Club Pickerel Fishing Tournament, State owned ponds

Apr. 10 – Regular Club Meeting, Ed Barry to speak on Crooked Island, Bahamas

Apr. 20 – Outing with White Clay Fly Fishers on White Clay Creek, PA

Apr. 26-27 – Delmarva Outdoors Expo, Harrington Fair Grounds

May 11 – Annual Club picnic with White Clay Fly Fishers, Cape Henlopen State Park, Lewes

Jun. 12 - Regular Club meeting, Grand Raffle

Jul. 10 – Outdoor casting, and refreshments at Rolling Meadows Club House, Lewes, starting 6:00 PM

Aug. 14 – Outdoor casting plus regular meeting, Rolling Meadows Club House, Lewes
Sep. 11 – Regular Club meeting Rolling Meadows Club House
Sep. 16 – Club member trip to Martha's Vineyard
Oct. 6 – Coast Day, Lewes
Oct. 12 – Club One Fly Contest
Nov. 13 - Regular Club meeting, Rolling Meadows Club House
Nov. 16 – Fall pickerel fly fishing tournament
Dec. 11 – Regular Club Meeting, Roy Miller to give an ASMFC update
Dec. 15 – Annual Species Contest cut-off date.

SFAOD Meeting April 10, 2019

Vice-President Bernie Stasko, filling in for absent President John Lupinetti, opened the meeting at 7 PM at the Rolling Meadows Club House in Lewes. Rich King announced that he would like to conduct a beach fly fishing tournament on the fall and is looking for an endorsement from our Club. He envisions restricting participation to the Bay side of Henlopen Point, probably the 2nd or 3rd week of September. He further suggested that it be held on a Saturday and be open to anyone with a fly rod for an entry fee of \$25-\$30 per participant. No boat or kayak entries would be allowed. The Club members present generally agreed to endorse this tournament, at least in concept. Rich will need to provide additional details at a later date.

Our membership Chair, Bob Kutay, stated that we still have 30 unpaid members for this year. These folks will be removed from our membership role by next month if they don't renew. Ron Smith gave a financial report for the Club. We started March with \$4,011 in our treasury and finished the month with \$4,638 due primarily to \$630 in deposits from membership dues. He reminded the members about the April 26-28 Delmarva Outdoor Expo at the Harrington Fair Grounds and that we need volunteers to run a Club booth at the Expo. Our annual outing with the White Clay Fly Fishers on White Clay Creek has been changed to April 27 because of the Easter holiday. As usual, the Club has member-tied flies for sale for \$1 each. New members can get 2 flies for free. Ed Barry has Club t-shirts and hats for sale and tickets for the Club Grand Raffle to be held in June.

Loretta Smith announced the results of the Club pickerel fly fishing tournament that was held on April 6. There were 8 teams who fished 5 of the public ponds in Sussex County. Team Esox-It-To-Me (Loretta Smith and Roy Miller) placed first with a catch of 21 pickerel totaling 352 inches. Second place went to Team Fly Attack (Jim DiDonato and Jason Gillespy) with 21 pickerel totaling 322 inches, and third place to Team Te-Ed Off (Ted Morlock and Ed Barry) with 91.5" of pickerel. Ted Morlock caught the largest pickerel (24") and Roy Miller caught the largest bass (13.75"). Worthy of note was the 20" pickerel caught by Walt Clark's grandson John and the 19 incher caught by young Arthur Egolf. The contest was followed by a pizza meal at Villa Capri. All who participated agreed that they had a fun day. Participants agreed in advance that no Club funds would be expended for this tournament. Bragging rights were the only reward for the winners. Special thanks to Loretta Smith for organizing the tournament.

Some discussion ensued concerning the new Species Journal being employed instead of the "A Good Year" tabulations that had been kept in recent years by Shawn Rakes. Jim DiDonato is heading up this project. There have been some growing pains associated with keeping and compiling Excel files, particularly for those Club members who have Apple computers. At least one Club member does not like the new system and wishes that we could return to the "A Good Year," but Shawn Rakes has relinquished responsibility for this due to his upcoming

deployment overseas. For now we are grateful to Jim for volunteering to coordinate and tabulate the numbers of species caught and member's fishing experiences through the use of his self-designed Species Journal.

Fishing Reports – Bernie Stasko and Jim DiDonato fished the pipes at Indian River and caught about 12 stripers each on an in-coming tide (note: all fishing at this location must be done on the Rehoboth Bay side of the pipes, not on the Indian River Marina side of these connecting pipes by order of the Division of Parks and Recreation). Young Arthur Egolf fished the Green Hill area of MD and caught largemouth bass and crappie. Walt Clark took 5 crappie at Sweetbrier Road in upper Red Mill Pond. Roy Miller and Loretta Smith fished Concord Pond spillway and took some American shad. Rich King said that black drum are present on the coral beds (actually not coral, but marine worm colonies) in lower Delaware Bay. Dennis Lahiff volunteered to compile a list of fishing guides that Club members have used over the years if we send him the appropriate information. This would not be an endorsement per se of a given guide, but if someone wanted more information about a guide, then the person reporting could be contacted for more details. Ed Barry is considering reaching out to other fly fishing clubs in the country to exchange information.

The fishing with the White Clay Fly Fishers on White Clay Creek on April 27 was hampered by high and muddy water from torrential rains the day before, although those who attended praised the luncheon as usual. Relatively few trout were taken by our Club members who made the drive upstate.



The shad (both American as shown above and hickories) were hitting this spring in the spillway below Concord Pond near Seaford. Photo by Roy Miller

Program – Our program that evening was given by Ed Barry. He detailed his fishing experiences on Crooked Island in the Bahamas, some 86 miles south of Cuba. Although Ed was not entirely successful in getting his videos to run on our computer projector, enough was shown that we got the gist of his bonefish success. Getting there was something of an adventure in itself and required a flight from Nassau to the Auklins to reach the resort on Crooked Island. Travel there in the future may become more convenient as the Bo Jangles restaurant chain is developing a resort and air strip.

May – There was no meeting *per se* in May. Instead the Club held its annual outdoor picnic at Cape Henlopen State Park on May 11 and we invited the White Clay Fly Fishers to join us for lunch, in addition to some shoreline fishing in the morning. Fishing was less than superb as the wind made conditions difficult. However, the wind did not hamper the lunch of grilled hot dogs, brats, and hamburgers. Horseshoe pitching and good conversation provided the entertainment. The fishing picked up on the Henlopen Flats later in the month as you can see in the following photos.



Roy Miller with a striper on May 15 at the Henlopen Flats. Picture taken by Bernie Stasko



Here is Lloyd Purcell with a flounder just prior to release that he caught on the Henlopen Flats on May 16.



Bill Licata with a striper on the Henlopen Flats, May 18

June 12 – Our June meeting at the Rolling Meadows Club House in Lewes was a swap meeting. Members were encouraged to bring tackle and related items they no longer needed. The meeting didn't start until 7:50 to allow for sales and bartering of equipment. There were a good number of rods and reels for sale and chances are if you really needed something, it was there for a reasonable price. New members and guests were introduced by Bob Kutay. We welcomed Phil Rockwell and his son Luke, and Eric Cisneros, all of whom are relatively new to fly fishing. Ron Smith said we have \$4,478 in our Club treasury after spending \$198 for supplies for the May picnic. Our next two meetings are scheduled for outdoors next to the Club house starting at 6 PM. Grilled burgers and dogs will be offered to those in attendance. Rich Seagraves will be our speaker in September. He will provide details about his record breaking year in 2018 while winning the "A Good Year" fishing contest. President Lupinetti and Treasurer Ron Smith both re-minded everyone that they are stepping down from the Board at the end of the calendar year. Walt Clark has volunteered to take Ron's place as Treasurer. Loretta Smith offered to run the annual raffle next year. Thank you to both of these volunteers. We still need someone to take on the responsibility of serving as Club president next year, and we only have five months left to fill these vacancy before the new year.

Fishing reports -

Frank Danner and Bernie Stasko jokingly said they caught a bushel of sponge crabs, plus one small flounder while fishing on the Henlopen Flats. Two of our younger members, Christian and Ethan, went boat fishing with Shawn Rakes and caught 4-5 stripers each under the lights. Walt Clark caught only crabs at Cape Henlopen. Ted Morelock has been fishing Ocean City Inlet and taking 10-15 stripers per trip, plus the occasional 3 lb. bluefish. Ted also said he had good luck fishing for brook trout on the Savage River in Western MD, as did Roy Miller on a separate trip to that area. Ted praised the state of MD for making the Savage R. catch and release only for brook trout. Bob Kutay caught some nice crappies in fresh water near Bald Eagle Creek. Rick Ranalli has been catching 12-15" weakfish on pink and white deceivers on Beach Plum Island. Members were reminded that the State has about filled its quota of beach vehicle permits so if you haven't renewed or purchased yours, better do so soon. Ed

Barry and Bill Licata tried for schooling bluefish with flies but couldn't get them to bite. Roy Miller and Ron Smith had better luck on bluefish and managed to catch all they wanted one morning before calling it quits. The blues were in a small school just behind Cape Henlopen Point and were accessible to Ron's boat. These fish ranged from 25-34" long and really put the fly tackle to the test. Clousers and deceivers were the flies of choice, and Roy used 6 inches of wire on his leader, while Ron used a 50 lb mono bite guard to keep the blues from cutting them off. Neither Roy nor Ron were sure what the bluefish were doing on the surface as they didn't appear to be actively feeding, but neither complained about this somewhat unique opportunity.



Here are some of the bluefish Roy (left) and Ron (right) took on May 22 at the mouth of DE Bay

Ethan Rakes fished Roosevelt Inlet with his Dad and they landed 3 bluefish and a few stripers. Loretta Smith, John Lupinetti and Ron Smith fished Roosevelt Inlet and the Broadkill River out of Ron's boat and took a small weakfish and numerous stripers, but not until nearly dark. Another Club member stated that he had good luck recently on the Gunpowder River in MD using a caddis fly plus dropper for trout.



Jerry Groll caught this spot on a crab fly. He also caught a Northern kingfish the same evening.



Loretta Smith caught this flounder on a fly on the Henlopen Flats.

After the fishing reports, the Grand Raffle was held. First prize was an Orvis Recon rod and reel combination won by Irv Eberhart. William Freeman won the ½ day charter with local captain Chuck Cook. Eleven prizes were awarded in all. The meeting adjourned at the conclusion of the Grand Raffle.

List of Grand Prize Winners

First Prize, Orvis Recon rod and reel- Irv Eberhart

Second Prize, ½ day charter fishing with Capt. Chuck Cook - William Freeman

Third Prize, Orvis Clearwater 7 wt. rod - Hammond

Fourth Prize, Large Arbor Orvis Clearwater reel - Garland Gingerich

Fifth Prize, Orvis stripping basket - Tim Drake

Sixth Prize, Gerber pliers - Roy Miller

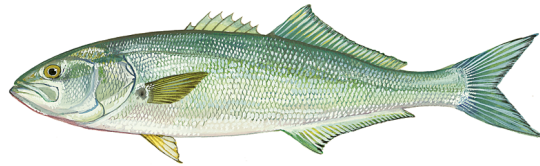
Seventh Prize, \$50 Orvis gift certificate - Bill Licata

Eighth Prize, double rod case - Mike Upman

Ninth Prize, Martin reel and line - Mike Toomey

Tenth Prize, Medalist reel and spool - Rick Ranalli donated to Mike Toomey

Eleventh Prize, wooden utility box - Ethan Rakes



Biologist Corner

The bluefish, *Pomatomus saltatrix*, is a migratory oceanic species whose juvenile stages inhabit inshore estuarine waters of the temperate region of our coast. They migrate seasonally, usually schooling by size. A favorite of sport fishermen, bluefish are voracious predators that follow the schools of bait north in the summer and south in the winter. They spawn along the Atlantic Coast on the continental shelf. The larvae drift into Delaware waters where the young-of-year may remain through the summer feeding on bay anchovy, Atlantic silversides, and juvenile Atlantic menhaden, although they will eat just about any prey item they encounter. The inshore waters of Delaware Bay as far upstream as the lower Delaware River, the Inland Bays, and the tidal tributaries to these systems all support bluefish schools through the summer months before they head offshore and southward to spend the winter.

They are sexually mature by age 2 and reach a maximum age of 12 years and a maximum size of 39 inches and 30 lbs. through rapid growth. There apparently are two cohorts or age groups of bluefish that spawn at different times, both in the spring and in the summer with possibly even a fall spawning cohort (Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, 2016). Larger, older fish tend to occupy the more northern portion of their natural range.

Bluefish are predominantly a recreational species. The recreational harvest averages about 80% of the total removals by fishing. Total recreational removals, including estimates of 15% loss rates for those released, have been averaging 20 million lbs. recently (ASMFC 2016). Generally bluefish are in the top five in recreational harvest along the east coast. Assessments show that bluefish are neither overfished, nor is overfishing occurring. Each year 83% of the harvest is allocated for recreational fisheries and 17% for commercial, but the commercial share can be increased if the recreational take is projected to be less than 83%. Presently the total bluefish biomass is just below the 223 million pound target administered jointly by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission and the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council.

Because of the bluefish's sharp teeth, special gear and care is needed for catching and handling bluefish. Although bluefish will seize just about any fly that looks like food, generally flies that imitate predominant baitfish in our area will elicit the most strikes. Such flies should be sized to the size of bluefish being sought. A Clouser deep minnow on a size 2-4 hook will do just fine for blues from 10-16 inches. I typically select a fly with a white belly and chartreuse or green back because these colors mimic those of an Atlantic silversides, especially if you include some pearl or silver crystal flash or flashabou along the sides of the fly. In the spring when the larger bluefish are

migrating north through our waters, I favor white as the predominant color with generous flash material along the sides. I like larger size Clousers for these migrating fish tied on 2/0-4/0 hooks, or deceivers or Clouser deceivers. One very important consideration is to use a 4-6" bite-guard of wire or 50 lb. plus mono or these larger fish will cut you off in a heartbeat. One way to tell whether you had a larger bluefish on the line in the spring if you weren't prepared with a bite guard is you usually lose your fly in the first few seconds of the fight. Needless to say if bite guards are required, extra care is needed when handling bluefish as they will clamp down on a finger or hand if you get careless. Such a mistake could result in an emergency room visit.

Although bluefish are not my favorite eating fish, when fresh, bluefish fillets make for a good meal. In my opinion, bluefish does not freeze well, so I prefer to eat it fresh. Just keep in mind the health advisories most states post regarding the consumption of bluefish. The reason for these advisories is that bluefish tend to pick up a body burden of chemicals like PCBs and pesticides when they forage upriver near industrial complexes like Wilmington and Philadelphia, plus because of their predacious nature, they tend to accumulate potential toxins carried around by their prey. Currently Delaware's advisory recommends that you eat no more than one meal of larger size bluefish per year from the Delaware Bay and River, or out along the Delaware coast. If you have exceeded this recommended consumption amount, no need to panic, this is a recommendation that is based on human lifetime consumption patterns. The point is don't keep exceeding this advisory level year after year if you want to limit your risk of contracting cancer solely from the consumption of bluefish.

Literature Cited

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission. 2018. ASMFC stock status overview. Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, Arlington, VA.

Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission. 2016. Bluefish, *Pomatomus saltatrix*, life history, and fishery summary. Arlington, VA.

Cole, Richard. 1995. Bluefish. Pages 147-150 in L.W. Dove and R.M. Nyman, eds. Living Resources of the Delaware Estuary. Delaware Estuary Program.

DE DNREC image of a bluefish painted by NC artist Duane Raver

rwm

For Sale:

PHWFF

Our local Project Healing Waters Fly Fishing liaison is Russell Martin (cell: 302-535-9896; email: rtlmartin1980@gmail.com). Project Healing Waters Fly Fishing is a Club-sponsored program and all club members are invited to help with this exciting and rewarding program. Please join the group at one or more of the periodic programs at the Veterans Home in Milford. The group meets every other Tuesday evening in Milford; contact Russell for details. You won't be sorry that you donated your time and talents to this very worthy cause.



The opening picture is courtesy of Rich King. Shown are various Club members working the flats next to the Cape Henlopen Fishing Pier. The closing photo was taken by Roy Miller taken from the beach side of the Henlopen flats.

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*Sundown on the Pacific coast of Costa Rica; photo by Roy Miller.
The opening picture of Saddlebunch Key, FL was taken in January.*