

SALTY BYTES

Newsletter of the Saltwater Fly Anglers of Delaware



July – October, 2023

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:

Loretta Smith – (302) 236 0894
Bill O’Connor – (302) 530-8253
Walt Clark – (610) 937 9535
Ron Smith – (301) 213-7637
Shawn Rakes – (302) 381-1871
Ed Hill – (484) 883-3326
Roy Miller – (302) 381-3760

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 the above number or send them via email to Bill O’Connor at sfaod@outlook.com



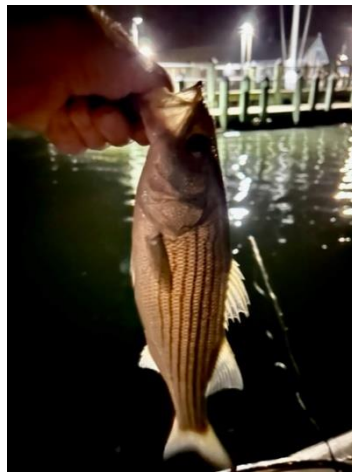
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SFAOD Meeting 7-12-2023

The meeting was preceded by outdoor casting adjacent to the Rolling Meadows Clubhouse. Ron Smith and helpers prepared grilled hot dogs, brats, and hamburgers for the attendees which were served at 6 PM. After that a short business meeting was held in the Clubhouse beginning at 7:04 PM.

Attendance: Board Members present included Loretta Smith, Ron Smith, Ed Hays, and Bill O'Connor. Absent: Roy Miller, Walt Clark, and Shawn Rakes.

New member: Jim Hayes is from Atlanta. He has fished all over the country. He just moved to Milton after looking everywhere in southern DE. He will fish for anything with a fly, and ties his own flies.



Bill Douwes fishing at night from Roy Miller's boat and an example of the stripers he caught that evening near the Lewes Coast Guard station on July 18.



Loretta Smith had some luck with spot and croaker on July 30 on the Cape Henlopen Flats. Photos by Roy Miller

SFAOD Meeting 8-9-2023

Board Members Present – Loretta Smith, Bill O’Connor, Roy Miller, Ron Smith, Walt Clark and Ed Hill.

Absent: Shawn Rakes.

Our annual raffle is scheduled for next month. An Orvis Hydros 5-7 reel will be added to the raffle.

Our membership Chair, **Bill O’Connor**, says we have approximately 100 members. Emails sent to members can be a problem if you have Comcast.net. You will need to look in your Junk files for emails from the Club and then change how they are characterized. We are trying to plan a fall trip to Cape May, NJ, perhaps to Corson’s Inlet in September after Labor Day, during the week. We should target an early incoming tide for fishing. The first ferry is 0830, and it arrives by 10:30. The Inlet is 30 mins. north of the ferry terminal. Friday Sep. 8 is the date of choice based on the incoming tide. Project Healing Waters guys are going over on the 6th by ferry, if anyone wants to help according to Bernie Stasko. We can pack a couple of cars going over to NJ to save money on the ferry ride.

Ed Hill - Ed is trying to line up a knife sharpener from Kitchen Connection to be a speaker in Sept. We need suggestions for a speaker in Nov. Ed Hale will be our speaker in October. Roy Miller will be the speaker in Dec.

Roy Miller – Will start on a newsletter soon, but won’t finish it until after the September meeting.

Walt Clark says that we have \$5,305 in our Treasury at present.

Ed Hill introduced our speaker for the evening, Bob Lombardi. Bob is primarily a kayak and shallow water fisherman who fishes the Chesapeake in MD and VA. Bob targets striped bass, spotted sea trout, and redfish. For kayak trips (or any small craft suitable for shallow waters) Bob first talked about pre-trip planning. His favorite fish to pursue are speckled trout. For this species he prefers clear water with grass beds in the area. His chosen location has to be reachable by kayak and not too deep. Although he fishes mostly with spinning gear, his advice would apply as well to anyone pursuing gamefish in shallow water with fly tackle. He is a member of Salt Strong which charges for an annual membership which he feels is well worth it.

He said that the rockfish in his area of the Chesapeake show up the 1st or 2nd week of May. Using Google Earth and charts from Navionics he looks for points, mud banks, rip-rap, and grass flats. He believes in the adage that 90% of the fish are in 10% of the available water. He would even allow that these fish are in 1% of the available water. He likes to fish shallow water that is adjacent to deeper water. Some of his favorite structure to target includes: 1) grass, 2) stump fields, 3) mud banks, and 4) sharp points and drop-offs, but it varies. For instance, he likes mud banks on high tide, but not on low tides. The presence of floating birds means there are fish in the area, regardless of whether the birds appear to be actively feeding. He’ll target crab pots because they are often set at the edges of grass beds.

If you want to get up with Bob with a personal question, his email address is rlombardi1957@gmail.com.

Everyone was appreciative of all the information shared with us by Bob.

After the program, we held a 50/50 raffle, which Roy Miller won.

Fishing Reports

Jerry Groll caught some freshwater fish on flies at Wagamons Pond. Loretta Smith fished Canary Creek at the bridge on Pilottown Road and caught a spot and a croaker. She also caught a bluefish up by Old Mill Creek. Ted Morlock fished in Cozumel last week and hooked 2 permit but lost them both. He also caught 5-6 bonefish, all while fishing with a guide. One of his bonefish was 8 lbs. He fished from a panga for what he termed as a very reasonable price. Ted also has three kayaks for sale if anyone is interested. There being no further reports, the meeting was adjourned.



That's Loretta Smith fishing the Cape Henlopen Flats again on August 13 and holding a spot up for a picture.

SFAOD Meeting 9-13-2023

Board Attendees: Loretta Smith, Roy Miller, Ron Smith, Bill O'Connor, Walt Clark, and Ed Hill. Absent was Shawn Rakes.

Program: Our speaker that evening was Dr. Ed Hale of the University of Delaware Sea Grant Program. Ed talked about the abundance and importance of key fishes in Delaware Bay and about recent successes in oyster aquaculture in the Inland Bays. Ed said that Delaware's Sea Grant program is roughly the equivalent of the Cooperative Extension system that is familiar to Delaware's agricultural interests. According to Ed, 20% of the world's population is dependent on seafood as their primary source of animal protein. In Delaware, recreational fishing is a \$116 million dollar industry, while the commercial fishing industry landings in Delaware are worth \$15-20 million. Nationwide, the commercial fishing industry accounts for 1.7 million jobs. Although only 14% of the seafood landings are from the East Coast, these landings account for 40% of the total value of seafood landed. Alaska accounts for 60% of total landings and 31% of total value. The East Coast recreational catch in terms of numbers are dominated by spotted sea trout, Atlantic croaker, and black sea bass. The recreational saltwater species most often harvested is the spot.

In Delaware in 2020 there were approximately 2 million recreational fishing trips. In Delaware there are 35 active gill netters. Delaware's most valuable commercial species is the blue crab of which 4.5 million lbs. are landed per year that are worth \$7-8 million dollars. Ed also mentioned the recent successes at the U of D in rearing oyster spat suitable for use as nursery stock by the nascent oyster aquaculture industry in Delaware's Inland Bays.

The membership listened intently to Ed's presentation and asked a number of questions. The Club thanked Ed for his excellent presentation.

Director's reports –

According to **Ed Hill**, at our next meeting we are to bring our favorite knives. Ed will try to get someone to demonstrate proper knife sharpening at the meeting. We still are in need for a speaker at our November meeting. **Loretta Smith** announced that the Club's pickerel fly fishing tournament will be held on November 11 at State-

owned ponds in Sussex and Kent Counties. Presently we are sold out of the Club booklets on saltwater fly fishing locations in Delaware. **Roy Miller** reported that he is presently working on a newsletter to cover the months of July through September.

Fishing Reports –

Jim DiDonato said he fished the White Clay Creek in downtown Newark and caught a snakehead at the Paper Mill Dam on a popper. Last night he fished under the lights in the Lewes/Rehoboth Canal near the Coast Guard Station and caught striped bass, bluefish, and weakfish. The weakfish were 16-18 inches according to Jim.



Here are a couple of shots of Jim with the snakehead he caught on White Clay Creek on Sep. 11

We selected the winners of our annual Club Raffle that night. Here are the winners:

Raffle Winners

- 1st Prize: Orvis Recon 8 Wt. rod with Orvis reel and line – Bernie Dormer
- 2nd Prize: TFO Saltwater Fly Rod – Jerry Groll
- 3rd Prize: Orvis Hydros 3 reel – Val Walters
- 4th Prize: Renzetti Vice – Walt Clark
- 5th Prize: Fishing trip under the lights donated by Ethan Rakes – Vick Zeno
- 6th Prize: \$200 Gift Certificate – Joe Helby
- 7th Prize: ½ day fishing on Ron Smith’s boat – Mac McNaught
- 8th Prize: ½ day fishing wwith Chuck Cook – Eric Danmeyer
- 9th Prize: Orvis stripping basket – Ed Hill
- 10th Prize: Custom made wooden rod tube made by Rick Ranalli – Joe Helbe
- 11th Prize: Don Avondolio book, “Essential Fly Fishing” – Roy Miller
- 12th Prize: Norvise Bobbin set – Roy Miller
- 13th Prize: \$50 Orvis gift certificate donated by Ron Smith – Loretta Smith (no relation)



Club members Joe Helbe (left), Roy Miller (right), and Frank Danner (not shown) gave fly casting instruction at Coast Day held on the U. of D. Marine Campus in Lewes on Oct. 1. Several other Club members attended and answered questions from the public. Photos by Walt Clark.

SFAOD Meeting 10-11-2023

Board of Directors Present: Walt Clark, Ron Smith, Ed Hill, Roy Miller and Bill O'Connor. Absent: Loretta Smith, Shawn Rakes.

In preparation for our speaker, members showed off favorite knives which they had been encouraged to bring to the meeting, which quite a few did. Some of the knives were heirlooms and all were important to their owners.

Speaker: Ed Hill introduced our speaker, Joshua Grogan (ogrogens@gmail.com). Joshua has a knife sharpening business. He was a butcher at one time and elected to open a sharpening business. He showed off his diamond surface sharpening stones. He uses Norton Mineral Oil on his oil stones. For serrated edges, he sometimes uses a Dremel tool. He gave demonstrations of how to restore a cutting surface and of how to put a fine edge on a blade. This demonstration was well received by the membership as nearly everyone has a favorite knife or two or a favorite pair of scissors for fly tying.

Board of Director's Reports: **Walt Clark** reported that we have over \$5,000 in our treasury. Our annual holiday dinner will be Friday January 5, 2024 at the Lewes Presbyterian Church Fellowship Hall. Our membership stands at around 100. **Ed Hill** reminded everyone that Oct. 14 will be our annual One Fly Contest (later postponed until Oct. 28 because of inclement weather on the 14th). **Roy Miller** is working on a Club Newsletter which will include the October meeting. The Club Pickerel Fly Fishing Tournament will be held on November 11. Let **Loretta Smith** know if you are interested in signing up as a two-person team. Eligible fishing lakes include all state-owned ponds in Kent or Sussex Counties. There will be a meal for participants after the contest at Bella Capri restaurant in Georgetown. And, speaking of knives, there will be live music and a celebration at Willey Knives near Greenwood on Oct. 21. In November there will be nominations accepted for the 2024 Club Board of Directors. Club member Hans Feindt will talk to us about his hobby of building fly rods. At our meeting on Dec. 13 there

will be judging held for our annual John Meaghre Fly Tying Contest. Bring your best saltwater fly that night to be entered in the judging. Roy Miller will be our speaker that night and he will bring everyone up to speed on the latest fishery regulatory developments from the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission. Roy also will show slides of some fishing trips he has taken this year.

Fishing Reports – Ron Tatman said he fished for silver salmon in Alaska recently. Another Club member reported some success fishing for stripers in the Choptank River using a dark and white fly.



Here's Roy Miller with a striper he caught near the Lewes Coast Guard Station night lights on October 28.
Photo by Hilary Douwes.

There was a 50/50 Raffle to end the meeting.

October 28 – One Fly Contest

The Club's annual One Fly Contest was held on Saturday morning October 28 after being postponed from Oct. 14 because of inclement weather. In brief the contest is open to any Club member who is willing to donate two saltwater flies, one of which will be selected by each participant in a blind drawing. The remaining flies become first prize for the contest winner. Each participant got an envelope that contained the fly that he or she was to use that day. If a contestant lost that fly, then the contest was over for the participant. Contestants could fish on foot from any tidal water area in Delaware. All contestants shared in coffee and doughnuts in the morning and returned to the Rolling Meadows Club House at 1:00 to dine on the pork barbeque and chili that Ron Smith prepared, and on Royal Farms fried chicken. Of the 14 Club members participating, Walt Clark was the only one to catch a fish on an eligible fly. Walt's trophy fish was a 6-inch bluefish he caught at Cape Henlopen Point, for which he was awarded the prize for biggest fish and the most fish. Congratulations Walt!

For Sale: At the October meeting visitor Ron Ritthaler (302-270-0435) announced that he has an Orvis 9 wt. 4 piece Trident rod with an Orvis Battenkill large arbor reel and line for sale. If you are interested, give Ron a call to see if the outfit is still available.

Schedule of Events

July 12 – Outdoor casting and regular meeting at Rolling Meadows Clubhouse

Aug. 9 – Regular meeting at Rolling Meadows Clubhouse

- Sep. 13** – Regular meeting at Rolling Meadows Clubhouse
- Oct. 11** – Regular meeting at Rolling Meadows Clubhouse
- Oct. 14** – Club One-Fly Contest (postponed until Oct. 28)
- Nov. 8** – Regular meeting at Rolling Meadows Clubhouse
- Nov. 11** – Club Pickerel fly fishing tournament
- Dec. 13** – Regular meeting at Rolling Meadows Clubhouse, Roy Miller, speaker
- Jan. 5** – Holiday banquet, Lewes Presbyterian Church Fellowship Hall



Biologist Corner:

Black Drum

Although not usually a prime target of fly fishermen in our area, immature black drum sometimes show up in our fly rod catches from lower Delaware Bay. In fact, Hilary Douwes, a friend of mine and wife of Club member Bill Douwes, caught a nice 25 incher this summer on her fly rod. I fileted this fish for her so that the four of us could enjoy a meal of grilled black drum. It was delicious. Although larger black drum have the unfortunate reputation of having wormy flesh, younger black drum typically do not have these parasites.

Adult black drum along the U.S. Atlantic coast make long migrations north and inshore in the spring and south and offshore in the fall. Juvenile black drum in the southeast U.S. and Gulf of Mexico appear to migrate less compared to the northeastern U.S. Black drum are a long-lived species (67 years plus) that nonetheless grows relatively fast. The official all tackle IGFA world record black drum was 113 lbs. and was caught in Delaware Bay (!) in 1975. Black drum spawn in coastal bays and estuaries. In lower Delaware Bay, spawning typically peaks in mid-May. Juveniles remain in the bays and estuaries at least through the summer before migrating south in the fall. Black drum feed on blue crab, mud crab, ribbed mussels, blue mussels, small surf clams, fish, squid, and even oysters. As black drum mature, they move offshore and form schools that migrate extensively. Sexual maturity for most occurs at ages 4-6.

I have caught a few juvenile black drum in lower Delaware Bay on the flats while fly fishing for croakers and spot. The aforementioned 25 incher that Hilary Douwes took this summer was caught on a Clouser deep minnow-type fly fished near the bottom on the Henlopen Flats. Other places I have taken them include the Outer Banks and Atlantic Beach areas of NC. Although their fight is not flashy, they are a determined and strong quarry that will test your tackle once they attain some size. If I were targeting them on fly rods, I would fish with crab and shrimp imitations fished near sandy or hard bottom, preferably on or near shellfish beds. Those fishing conventional tackle favor clam baits fished on the bottom, day or night. The marine worm beds better known as the coral beds in lower Delaware Bay traditionally have been a favorite area to catch large mature black drum that are in Delaware Bay in the spring for spawning purposes.

rwm



This is Hilary Douwes with a nice black drum she caught on a fly off the Henlopen Flats on August 26.

PHWFF: Club member Jim DiDonato is the leader of the local chapter of Project Healing Waters Fly Fishing, a national charitable organization dedicated to healing the physical and emotional wounds of our disabled military veterans through fly fishing. The Dover program is the only one in Delaware. There is no formal connection to SFAOD, though club members Bernie Stasko and Joe Helbe join Jim in volunteering their time and energy to make the program successful.

Veterans with a VA-recognized disability are eligible to participate. They don't need to have any fly fishing experience. PHWFF provides guidance, equipment and – perhaps most importantly – camaraderie. The Dover Program meets on the first and third Wednesday of every month at 6:00 p.m. During the cold season the group is hosted by the Elks Lodge on Saulsbury Road in Dover, where the veterans learn to build rods and tie flies. During the warmer months they fish local waters, particularly the Boy Scout's Akridge Reservation in Dover. Jim invites SFAOD members to get 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. To learn more about the program please visit <https://projecthealingwaters.org/>.

[Please Stay Safe](#)



The cover and ending photos were taken on the Cape Henlopen Flats by Roy Miller this summer