

SALTY BYTES

Newsletter of the Saltwater Fly Anglers of Delaware



Nov. 2023 – Feb. 2024

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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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 at sfaod@outlook.com



number or send them via email to Bill O’Connor

SFAOD Meeting November 8, 2023

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

Loretta Smith served as acting President. The first order of business was nominations for the Club Board of Directors for 2024. Bernie Stasko nominated the existing Board for another year and Bob Hammond seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Program – Our program that night was presented by Club member Hans Feindt and was entitled “Building a Fly Rod.” Hans is a rod building hobbyist who builds rods just for his own use. He started rod building in the 1980s after reading Charlie Waterman’s book on fly fishing. His first rod utilized an 8 wt. Orvis fiberglass blank. His first fish on a fly was a smallmouth bass he caught on a Sneaky Pete surface fly. He has built two-piece rods in 2, 5, and 8 wt., and were 4 rods for a total of 7 rods. His reasons for rod building are as follows: to learn a new craft or skill, to build a rod for a specific scenario, to try different materials, to experience the satisfaction of building one, and to save money?? For guides he either uses guide kits or buys individual guides. Other supplies include epoxy, glue for the reel seat, guide wrapping epoxy and color preservatives, scissors, tape measure, craft brushes, Exacta knife, a thread tensioning device he bought for \$50 from Mud Hole Company, epoxy mixer, and isopropanol for clean-up. He uses an alcohol burner to eliminate the ends of tied off thread and then puts three coats of color preserver on the thread wraps.

Board Member Reports – Loretta Smith says that this fall’s pickerel tournament is scheduled for Saturday Nov. 11. In future years she recommends moving the tournament to Oct. to avoid opening weekend of deer hunting season. She urged all not to forget the John Meaghre saltwater fly tying contest judging next month at the end of the regular meeting and to get your best fly in by early in the Dec. meeting.

Walt Clark distributed a Treasurer’s report. Our biggest annual expense is the holiday dinner in January. Admission to the dinner this year on Jan. 5 will cost \$25/person, plus the Club will be contributing \$10/person since the dinner total cost is expected to be \$35/person. Bob Hammond suggested that the Club could hold a silent auction at future meetings to beef up our treasury using items donated by Club members.

Ed Hill announced that Roy Miller will be our December speaker. Roy will present an update on Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission management decisions for 2024 fisheries, plus as is his custom, he will do a Power Point presentation on special fishing trips he took in 2023.

Ron Smith reported on the One Fly Contest held on Oct. 28. Walt Clark won the competition with a small bluefish. Ron said he will shoot for a mid-September event next year in the hope that warmer fall weather will result in more fishing success.

Fishing Reports – Joe Helby reported that a buddy of his caught stripers at Montauk, NY this fall. Irv had fished the Chesapeake Bay with a spinning rod that had a fly positioned below the plug as a dropper near the Ches. Bay Bridge. Another member reported that he did well at Ragged Pt. on flies. Austin and Bob Hammond fished White Clay Creek this month and landed none, but lost one rainbow trout. Loretta Smith caught bluegills and other sunfish below Silver Lake Dover. Roy Miller reported that he and Bill and Hilary Douwes caught sub-legal stripers on small flies at the Lewes Coast Guard Station under the lights at night near the end of October.

A 50/50 raffle was held at the end of the meeting which was won by Loretta Smith.



Here's Loretta Smith with a nice pickerel she caught on a fly Nov. 11. Unfortunately the pickerel tournament scheduled for that day was cancelled due to lack of participation. She and Roy Miller went fishing anyway.

SFAOD Meeting 12-13-2023

Board Members Present: Bill O'Connor, Ron Smith, Ed Hill, Roy Miller, Loretta Smith, Walt Clark. Shawn Rakes was absent. There were 21 total in attendance.

Board Reports - Acting President Loretta Smith announced that long time Club member Clyde Seibert passed away recently. Clyde was very personable and liked and admired by all. He was a fixture on the Cape Henlopen Flats who almost always caught fish. He will be missed by all who knew him.

New member Tad Thayer was introduced. Loretta announced that Roy Miller is our speaker tonight.

Walt Clark distributed a Treasurer's report. Our Club balance to start the year was \$6,418 with the present balance being \$4,763. At our Holiday Dinner on January 5, our speaker will be a Delaware River Pilot. Walt also announced that we are re-doing our webpage for a one-time cost of \$1,500.

Ed Hill said that our goal with the new website is to offer the membership the ability to pay their annual dues on-line for the first time using Pay Pal. Chase Spears is our contractor who also services the White Clay Fly Fishers website.

Bill O'Connor announced that our end of the year membership totaled 103 individuals.

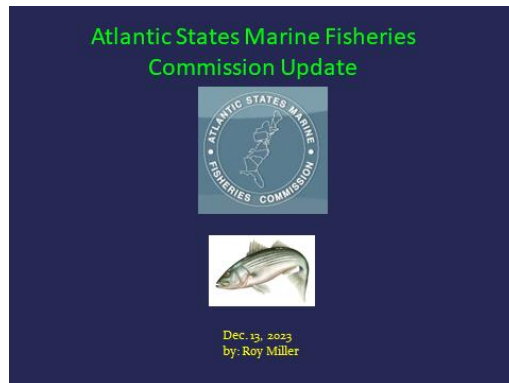
Ron Smith highlighted the Club merchandise for sale displayed on the table next to the kitchen. Ron said that we will be using the Lewes Presbyterian Church Fellowship Hall lower level as our Saturday morning fly tying location beginning the first Saturday in January. Lewes Harbor Marina will not be available to our Club for fly tying in 2024.

Fishing Reports – Steve said he bought a new kayak and used it to catch a 20" striper on Canary Creek using a Rattletrap plug. Jim DiDonato fished from the bank on the upper Nanticoke River with Club member Bernie

Stasko and they caught 5 chain pickerel two weeks ago. A more recent trip yielded no hits at the same location. Loretta Smith caught 3 largemouth bass in the Broadkill River in Milton.

Program – Club Board member Roy Miller presented his annual update on the fisheries management decisions recently reached by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission at the meeting held in Beaufort, NC in late October. At this meeting the deliberations of the Striped Bass Board were probably of most interest to our Club. Because of continued poor reproductive success in the Chesapeake Bay spawning rivers for the most recent five years including 2023, the Board determined that a 14.5% reduction in recreational landings is necessary in 2024 to keep stock recovery on target for 2029. The proposals to reduce landings include restrictive legal slot limits for the Atlantic Coastal stocks including those available to Delaware. Slots under consideration include 28-31 inches with one fish/day during the open season. A final decision on these slot limits will be decided at the January Commission meeting. Roy also provided updates on stocks of summer flounder, scup, black sea bass, black drum, red drum, cobia, and a number of other species, including some like horseshoe crab which are not recreationally fished but are important nonetheless to Delaware citizens. No female horseshoe crabs will be allowed to be harvested by commercial interests in 2024 in Delaware Bay.

Roy also presented Power Point slides on fishing trips he made to West Virginia and to Montana in 2023. In Montana he fly fished the Big Horn River, the Madison River, and an impounded portion of the Missouri River. Some nice size brown and rainbow trout were taken at these locations. In West Virginia on the north Fork of the South Branch of the upper Potomac, it was all rainbow trout except for one brown. The flies of choice there were #14-16 emerging caddis flies.



Here's Roy with a 20" rainbow from The Gates of the Mountains on the Missouri River in September, 2023.

Annual Banquet

The SFAOD Annual Banquet was held the evening of Jan. 5, 2024 in the Fellowship Hall of the Lewes Presbyterian Church. Roy Miller offered the invocation and then members and guests enjoyed the catered dinner. At the conclusion of the meal acting Club President Loretta Smith offered announcements and recognized the 2023 winners of the John Meaghre Saltwater Fly Tying Contest. The entry from Club founder Don Avondolio won first prize. Second prize was claimed by Ed Hill and Jim DiDonato's fly won third place.

Our speaker that night was Captain Daniel MacElrevey who is a First Class River Pilot with the Pilot's Association for the Bay and River Delaware. These highly skilled captains perform an invaluable service for the shipping industry by boarding large commercial ships that enter lower Delaware Bay. These River Pilots then take control and pilot these large vessels upstream to the C&D Canal, and the ports of Wilmington and Philadelphia. Captain Daniel has spent 25 years piloting locally.

The last event of the evening was the drawing and distribution of door prizes donated by Club members and their families. Many thanks to Ron and Lorraine Smith and Walt Clark and the rest of the membership of Lewes Presbyterian Church for allowing our group to use their facility for our annual banquet. Because of the banquet, there was no Club business meeting held in January.



1st Class River and Bay Pilot Daniel MacElrevey was the speaker at the our Club Holiday Banquet on Jan. 5, 2024.



Here's Don Avondolio (left) and Ed Hill (right) with their first and second place winning flies at the Annual Banquet.



Here are the entries for the fly tying contest held Dec. 13, 2023. Don's is in the center front and Ed's is center left.



Mathew Kern contributed this picture of a small tarpon he caught in Puerto Rico this January while fishing with Backwater Tarpon and Snook Charters



These striper/largemouth bass flies were tied and photographed this winter by long-time member Rick Ranalli.



Fly tying at Lewes Presbyterian Church basement winter 2024 on Sat. mornings.



Jerry Groll tying on Sat. morning

SFAOD Meeting 2-15-2024

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

Program – SFAOD Board member Ed Hill presented a computerized program on the Maryland Fly Fishing Trail--an interactive computer site available to anyone that covers primary fly fishing locations in 23 counties in Maryland. Ed started in Western MD and worked his way East while projecting images from the website for all to see. In Western MD, trout and smallmouth bass are the star attractions. Notable trout waters include the Savage River, the Youghiogheny River, the Casselman River, and the North Branch of the Potomac River. Club members like Roy Miller and Ron Smith who have fished these waters over the years offered insights on their experiences. Ed then moved the focus to Central MD and finally to the Capitol Region and then concluded in Southern MD on the Western and Eastern Shore of the Chesapeake.

Club member Jim DiDonato gave an update on the Project Healing Waters program. The focus of activities in lower Delaware moved to Dover from Milford about three years ago. The purpose of the organization is to help heal the physical and emotional scars of veterans through the activities of fly fishing, fly casting, fly tying, and rod building. Jim says there are now 14 disabled vets in our local chapter of this larger national program. The group welcomes participation by any and all who want to be involved in this worthwhile organization. For more details, see the write-up by Jim at the end of this newsletter.

Board Member Reports – Walt Clark said that we have 41 paid members at present. We donated \$130 to Lewes Presbyterian Church for use of their Fellowship Hall downstairs for fly tying on Saturday mornings which started on January 6 lasting through the month of March. Ed Hill said that our website revision is progressing and that pictures from Club members are needed to freshen the visuals on our revised website. Ed is actively soliciting suggestions from our Club members for future Club programs. Ron Smith directed attention to our Club merchandise table. Ron also announced that our Club is considering initiating a fly fishing school this spring for a limited number of attendees, probably 10 or under. There will be a modest fee that includes a year’s membership in our Club. More details will follow. It will be taught by existing Club members and will include a visit to the Cape Henlopen Flats for a fly fishing outing.

Club Schedule of Events in 2024

Jan. 5 - Club Holiday Banquet, Lewes Presbyterian Church

Feb. 15 – Regular meeting Rolling Meadows Clubhouse, Lewes

Mar. 13 - Regular meeting Rolling Meadows Clubhouse, Lewes
Apr. 10 – Regular meeting Rolling Meadows Clubhouse
May 11 – Club picnic at Cape Henlopen State Park
May 18 – Club fly fishing tournament for bass and crappie in Delaware Public Ponds
June 12 – Fly casting, grilled food and business meeting at Rolling Meadows Clubhouse
July 10 – Fly casting, grilled food, and business meeting at Rolling Meadows Clubhouse
Aug. 14 – Regular meeting Rolling Meadows Clubhouse
Sep. 11 – Regular meeting Rolling Meadows Clubhouse
Sep. 13 – Club fishing trip to Corson’s Inlet, NJ
Sep. 21 – Club One-Fly Fishing Contest
Oct. 6? – Coast Day Lewes campus
Oct. 9 – Regular meeting Rolling Meadows Clubhouse
Oct. 26 – Club Pickerel Fly Fishing Tournament
Nov. 13 – Regular meeting Rolling Meadows Clubhouse
Dec. 11 – Regular meeting Rolling Meadows Clubhouse

Biologist Corner:



A lot has been happening on the management front for striped bass in 2023 and early in 2024, so I thought I would use this opportunity to give you a quick update on this important species. As most of you know, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission is charged with adopting measures for the states to implement that will bring about a restoration of the adult stocks of striped bass which just a few years ago had been both overfished and overfishing was occurring (the current rate of removal was too great). Through a series of previous restrictions on fishing, the rate of removal had been checked, but the spawning stock is still not fully re-built. Fishing removals went up appreciably in 2022 because the last dominant year class of stripers (those born in 2015) had grown long enough to enter the coastal sport fishery at the minimum slot size of 28 inches. Because of these removals in 2022, the recovery of the stocks was no longer on schedule for 2029. The Commission’s Plan required additional fishing restrictions for the states because reproduction in the vital Chesapeake Bay spawning rivers has been well below the target for the past 5 years in a row, and 2023 was one of the lowest reproduction years on record. The additional restrictions for 2024 call for a 14.5% reduction in the removals for coastal states including Delaware.

Draft Addendum II to the striped bass fishing plan was proposed and hearings were held in December and early January. The net results are a set of very restrictive measures for the states to implement for the 2024 season. Specifically, all coastal states including Delaware will have to adopt a legal slot of 28-31 inches total length and a 1 fish/day recreational fishing limit. In the Chesapeake Bay waters only, the legal slot will be 1 fish at 19-24” per day. Those who have been paying attention will note that the slot limit of 28-31 inches had been in effect for a limited term basis in 2023 by emergency decree. Now these restrictive measures have become more formalized and probably will not be loosened until a subsequent stock assessment looks more favorable so that the deadline of 2029 for a full recovery can be met.

Commercial fisheries, which only account for about 10% of the total removals, will have to reduce existing quotas by 7%. These measures must be put into place as quickly as possible given the regulatory process and abilities of each state. The Delaware Division of Fish and Wildlife has the ability to adopt regulations fairly expeditiously, so I would expect to see new regulations on striped bass prior to the fish showing up in our sport fish catches this spring.

rwm

Artwork of striped bass courtesy of DNREC's Division of Fish and Wildlife, Fisheries Section

The following message is from Club member Jim DiDonato:

PHWFF: Fellow SFAOD members, this message is to provide you with a very brief summary of what's been happening with Project Healing Waters Fly Fishing (PHWFF) in Delaware, and to solicit in-kind donations to support our mission.

Hopefully, you're already aware that PHWFF exists to support the emotional and physical healing of our nation's disabled military veterans, and it uses fly fishing to do that. Almost three years ago when I assumed leadership of the Dover Program – the only PHWFF presence in Delaware – there were only four active veteran participants. Today there are 14, and I believe that number will continue to grow during 2024.

We meet twice monthly in the Dover area, and sometimes we do additional special activities. Some of our "special" activities would be very familiar to SFAOD members. Those include fishing local ponds, helping DNREC stock trout at White Clay Creek, and taking a daytrip to Cape May to fish the shoreline there. Good things are happening, and I sense that the lives of our disabled veterans are better for their participation in the program.

Where the Dover Program was once sponsored by SFAOD, there hasn't been a formal relationship for several years. Several members of SFAOD have volunteered – and continue to do so – over the years to make the program a success. The one major thread that bonds our groups is our love of fly fishing. Because our budget is small, in-kind donations (donations of items rather than money) are very helpful. I've only been a fly fisherman for about six years, but my experience has been that there is a special community among fly anglers, and they truly enjoy helping each other.

So, my purpose with this message is to raise awareness among SFAOD members of our existence and mission, and to put PHWFF on your "radar" for possible in-kind donations. While all items are appreciated, those related to fly tying – hooks, beads, marabou, etc. – would be useful, and tying vices (with metal bases) would be of particular value. For what it's worth, PHWFF is a 501-c-3 non-profit organization. That means that money and in-kind donations are all tax deductible, and PHWFF headquarters will provide you with a helpful tax form.

Given the chance, I'll repeat most of this during our next SFAOD meeting. But, with this message I'm hoping to reach the entire membership, including those who might not be there on meeting nights. Whether F2F or via email, I'll gladly answer questions you might have about any facet of our program. Thanks. Jim

James DiDonato

Please Stay Safe



The lead picture was taken in late October behind the Beaufort Hotel in Beaufort, NC at the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission meeting. The closing photo was taken in warmer weather on the Henlopen Flats. Both photos by Roy Miller.