

SALTY BYTES

Newsletter of the Saltwater Fly Anglers of Delaware



October to December, 2024 Newsletter

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 Oct. 9, 2024

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

Club President Loretta Smith convened the meeting at the Rolling Meadows Club House at 7:02 PM. Loretta said that our pickerel fly fishing contest scheduled for Oct. 26 only has three contestants so far.

Program - Hans Feindt introduced our speaker this month, Club member Jim DiDonato. Jim did a Power Point talk about his June 2024 trip to Harman's Cabins in West Virginia. On this trip he teamed up with Club members Roy Miller, Bill Douwes, and Ed Hill. The guys rented a cabin with four bedrooms from Harman's and fished June 9-11, staying two nights in the cabin. Harman's controls access to 2.5 miles of the North Fork of the South Branch of the Potomac River. They stock their stretch of the River heavily with rainbow trout from 14" to 20" or more. You have to rent one of their cabins to be eligible for fishing their stretch of River. The only fee Harman's charges in addition to the cabin rental is an \$8 per person one-time/trip fee for fishing which helps pay for trout stocking. A West Virginia fishing license also is required.

The guys enjoyed the fishing and the accommodations which were quite comfortable. There is no restaurant nearby so it is best to bring your own food which can be prepared in the full kitchen in each cabin. In addition each cabin has an outdoor charcoal grill.

Bill and Roy had their best luck with size 14-16 caddis dry flies and light Cahill patterns tied on Klinkhammer-style emerger hooks. All fishing at Harman's is catch and release. It is about a 5-hour drive to Harman's from Lewes and the nearest town of any size is Petersburg, about 10 miles from Harman's.



Bill Douwes and Jim DiDonato waded in and get ready to fish at Harman's.

Board of Director's Reports – Walt Clark said the Club started 2024 with a balance of \$5,595. Thus far this year our beginning balance plus income amounted to \$9,698. That balance minus expenses for the year leaves us with \$5,234. We made a total of \$205 from our annual raffle after expenses were deducted. Walt reminded everyone of our annual banquet the evening of January 3, 2025 at the Lewes Presbyterian Church Fellowship Hall.

Ron Smith has Club merchandise for sale so please see him if you are interested in Club hats, shirts, or jackets. Ron gave a report of the Club One-Fly Contest which was held on Sep. 21. Morgan Krell caught the largest fish, a 26" bluefish from Indian River Inlet. Roy Miller caught the most fish, a 16" striper and 2 small black sea bass. The striper came from Fresh Pond and the sea bass from the pipes and causeway between Burton's Island and the State yacht basin on the north side of Indian River Inlet. Hans Feindt caught a flounder next to the Henlopen Pier which was the third largest fish caught that day.

Roy Miller has prepared a newsletter to cover the summer months, but it is not yet posted on our website.

Bill O'Connor said that we have 104 paid members in our Club. Several of us participated in the U. of D. Coast Day celebration on Oct. 6 by offering instruction in fly casting and other advice to all who had an interest and stopped by our booth. Frank Danner and Joe Helby did most of the casting instruction. The Coast Day coordinators seemed pleased with our participation.



Hilary Douwes seemed to be getting a kick out of her casting lesson from Joe Helby on Coast Day at the U of D on Oct. 6



Roy Miller caught this small spotted sea trout on the Henlopen Flats in October.



Ron Smith (left) and Roy Miller (center and right) had some luck at Concord Pond during the Club's Oct. 26 pickerel fly fishing contest. That's a largemouth bass Roy is holding on the right.



Jim DiDonato caught this Spanish mackerel on a fly at Fort Walton Beach in FL in October.

Fishing Reports – Jim DiDonato said that his Project Healing Waters group made a trip to the Dream Catcher Lodge on the West Branch of the Delaware River near Deposit, NY Oct. 1-3, 2024. In addition to two of the veterans from Project Healing Waters and Jim who is the group’s coordinator, they were joined by Joe Helby and Bill Douwes who served as experienced fly casters and trout fishermen. The group fished mostly streamers and caught and released some nice size browns.

For other fishing reports, Jim DiDonato said he caught a Eurasian perch which looks very similar to our yellow perch while he was in Europe. He caught it on a wooley bugger. Rick Ranalli caught some nice bluefish in Canary Creek between the bridge and the Coast Guard Station. He reported that there were some fish under the Coast Guard lights on the Lewes and Rehoboth Canal. Loretta Smith caught a white catfish and 3 white perch at Prime Hook Refuge in the canal. Loretta also reported that a woman she ran into told her that weakfish and speckled trout have been caught recently at Broadkill Beach. Hans Feindt reported catching a sea robin on a fly from the flats near Cape Henlopen Pier.

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

SFAOD Meeting November 13, 2024

Board of Directors Present: Ron Smith, Walt Clark, Bill O’Connor, Roy Miller, Hans Feindt, and Ed Hill. Loretta Smith was absent. Walt Clark served as acting President for this meeting.

Nominations for 2025 Board of Directors – Bernie Stasko nominated and Bill Douwes seconded a motion to re-appoint the existing slate of Directors to serve again in 2025.

Program – Our speaker was Dr. Noah Bressman from Salisbury Univ. In addition to being on the faculty at the University, Noah also is a dedicated angler with 455 species to his credit taken on hook and line. Noah’s task was to educate us about invasive fish species he has studied while at the University. He talked about blue catfish first, and then Northern snakeheads.

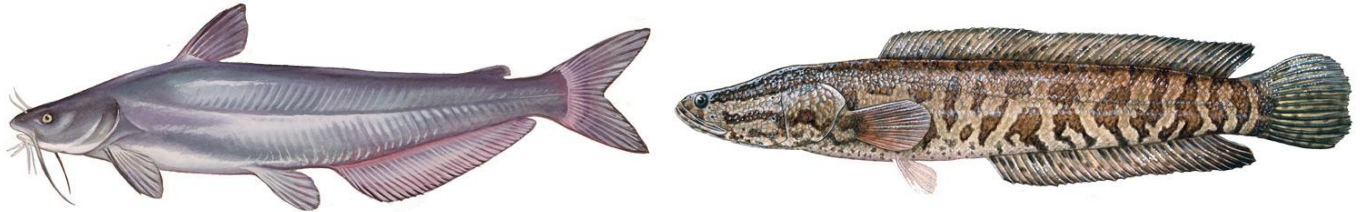
Blue catfish are native to the Mississippi, Ohio, and Missouri River drainages. They were stocked by the State of Virginia about 50 years ago. They are now ubiquitous in the fresher portions of the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries. He is focusing his studies on the population in the Nanticoke River system. He uses electrofishing, trotlines, trawls, and sport fishing tournaments to sample the blue catfish population. He has been utilizing stable isotope analysis of N, C, and S to characterize the population.

Blue catfish are active predators that compete with native white catfish. Their diet includes white perch, blueback herring, and blue crabs. He cited statistics that blue catfish eat an estimated 2.5 million blue crabs in one river system in a year. He once found a mature wood duck in a blue catfish stomach. Noah and his students are investigating ways to reduce the impact of blue catfish on other desirable species like striped bass.

Blue catfish spawn early to mid-summer. Noah will study the impacts of this species on striped bass recruitment. He also is interested in their effects, if any, on threatened species of freshwater mussels.

Concerning the Northern snakeheads (*Channa argus*), they have an air breathing chamber which allows them to wiggle over land for short distances. They avoid waters with low pH (less than 4.8), saltwater, or waters with high dissolved carbon dioxide.

Legislation was passed in MD to require FDA inspection of blue catfish bound for commercial markets. The Club thanked Dr. Bressman for his excellent presentation on these two invasive species.



A blue catfish (left) and a Northern snakehead (right) painted by Dwayne Raver and copied from DNREC Div. of Fish and Wildlife files

Treasurer’s Report – Walt Clark said that as of 1/1/2024 the Club had \$5,595 in its treasury. Now we have \$5,246. Walt reminded everyone that our annual Holiday banquet will be Friday January 3. The cost is \$25/person. Please reserve your spot by Dec. 14. The meal will feature roast beef and mahi mahi fillets. Our speaker will be Jim Duffey, a local story teller and humorist.

Ed Hill listed future speakers that are already booked for our Club meetings. Roy Miller will be the speaker in December. As is customary at this time of year, Roy will talk about recent meetings and decisions by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission. He also will show Power Point slides of special fishing trips he made in 2024. Other speakers in the New Year will include Bill Douwes who will talk about stillwater trout fishing in Idaho. We also will have a program that features how to attach lines and leaders, fly fishing knots, and rigging of other fly fishing gear. A previous speaker we have used (Bob Lombardi) just published another book which is selling on Amazon called “All About Tides.” We could invite him back to talk about his new book. Ed mentioned that fly fishing icon Bob Popovics passed away recently after a tragic accident.

Bill O’Connor mentioned that member Steve Deathridge will start an Outreach Committee for our Club. Anyone with skills or interest in social media should contact Steve. Morgan Krell would be a good addition to this Committee, as would Bill Douwes.

Ron Smith said that he has new brochures for our Club. In order to show live fly tying videos at our meetings we need a camera that can project images of members or guests tying flies at our meetings on the wall for all to see.

New Member – Vince Higgens introduced himself. He moved here three years ago from Chestertown, MD. The majority of his previous fly fishing was in freshwater.

Joe Helby won the 50/50 raffle and donated the proceeds back to the Club.

Fishing Reports – Hans Feindt and Scott Allen fished with guide Mike Sleplesky (TightLiningMaryland) on the Gunpowder River using Euro-nymphing techniques. He used a 3 weight with 2 flies. He caught a number of brown trout, but none were large. Morgan Krell fished Montauk, NY from the shore and bay entrances. There were lots of anchovies and peanut bunker. He caught some schoolie-size stripers, but no false albacore. He has been fishing Indian River inlet regularly for slot size and smaller striped bass at the start of the in-coming tide. He

traveled to Cape Charles, VA and fished by kayak. He caught 20-30 redfish and some small speckled trout. He also fished Sandy Hook, NJ by boat. There were both birds and fish close to shore.

Bill Sperduto fished with Captain Shawn Rakes as a result of winning a trip with him in our Club Raffle. They found a nice pod of small stripers up to 24" off of the Lewes Coast Guard Station at night under the lights.

The meeting ended around 9 PM.

SFAOD Meeting Dec. 11-2024

Attendance: Board of Directors included Roy Miller, Bill O'Connor, Hans Feindt, Ed Hill, Ron Smith, Walt Clark and Loretta Smith.

President Loretta Smith convened the meeting at the Rolling Meadows Club House at 7:15 PM.

The first business item was elections for Club Board of Directors for 2025. Last month the existing slate of Directors was re-nominated to serve again in 2025. The membership voted and the existing slate was re-approved unanimously for 2025 with no additions or nominations from the floor.

Program – Our speaker was Board member Roy Miller. Roy's topic included a Power Point briefing on the latest deliberations of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission since Roy serves as Governor Carney's Appointee to the Commission, followed by Power Point slides of some fly fishing trips Roy made in 2024, and some pictures of Club events he participated in like the One-Fly Contest and the Pickerel Fly Fishing Tournament held in October. An important date for our fishermen is coming up on December 16 and that is a special 4-hour meeting of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission in Arlington, VA to discuss size, season, and daily harvest limits for striped bass in 2025. The Commission will be deciding on whether to continue the restrictive slot limit of 28-31" again in 2025 or whether the slot will need to be adjusted or seasons altered so that the recovery of the striped bass spawning stock biomass can be kept on schedule to meet the 2029 deadline for stock recovery according to the latest addendum in the Atlantic Striped Bass Management Plan. In addition to striped bass, Roy briefed the Club on stock status and management measures expected in 2025 for other important species like summer flounder, scup, black sea bass, bluefish, red drum, Atlantic croaker, American shad and river herring, shark species, spotted sea trout, Atlantic menhaden, and some non-sportfish species like horseshoe crabs and American lobster.

For his fishing trips, Roy highlighted his family fly fishing trip to the Big Horn River in central Montana this past summer. He also showed slides of the catches made in the Club's annual One-Fly Contest and the fall pickerel fly fishing tournament. The Club thanked Roy for his presentation.



Here's a nice 22.5" brown Roy caught in the Bighorn River in MT this summer.

Treasurer's Report – Walt Clark reminded everyone of our annual Holiday banquet on Friday January 3. The cost is \$25/person. He urged everyone to sign up by Dec. 14 as we have to guarantee the number of attendees for our caterer. The meal will feature roast beef and mahi mahi fillets. Our speaker will be Jim Duffey, a local story teller and humorist.

Ed Hill said that other speakers in the New Year will include Bill Douwes in February who will talk about stillwater trout fishing in Idaho. We also will have a program that features how to attach lines and leaders, fly fishing knots, and rigging of other fly fishing gear. Winter fly tying sessions will start the Saturday morning after the banquet at 0900 on January 4 on each Saturday morning until the end of March downstairs at the Lewes Presbyterian Church. Bring your own fly tying equipment.

Roy Miller said that he will start on a new Club newsletter after the first of the year.

Ron Smith said that he has six microfibre Club shirts in a large size for sale. He priced jackets and vests and noted that both items with logo on the back and the front cost \$78 each, but with the logo for the Club just on the front, the price is \$48 each. He has two white Club t-shirts on sale now.

Fishing Reports – Jim DiDonato said he tried fishing in the Upper Delaware River in NY and caught nothing. From there he drove to Altimar NY to try for lake-run salmon at Pulaski. He managed to catch a nice bright 22 inch coho. He wanted to know if other Club members might be interested in making a fall Club excursion to that area next fall.

Morgan Krell tried Indian River Inlet over Thanksgiving and caught 25 stripers by fishing at night with Semperflies from the South Jetty. There is dredging going on there now. Roy Miller added that Capt. Aaron Hurd complained to Roy about the muddy water from the recent deposition of dredge spoils and trucked in fill at the north side of Indian River Inlet. Morgan also fished the Schuylkill River near West Chester for muskies. He had one make a pass at his fly, but he didn't hook up.

Rick Ranalli reported catching two stripers on flies at Masseys Landing on a high tide.

Hans Feindt won the 50/50 raffle and donated part of the proceeds back to the Club.
The meeting ended around 9 PM.

Tentative Schedule:

Jan. 3, 2025 – Annual holiday banquet

Jan. 4, 2025 – Start of weekly Saturday morning Club fly tying sessions, Lewes Presbyterian Church Fellowship Hall basement.

Feb. 12 – Regular meeting Rolling Meadows Clubhouse, 7 PM. Bill Douwes speaking about Stillwater fly fishing.

Mar. 12 – Regular meeting Rolling Meadows Clubhouse, 7 PM. Johnny Moore, Div. Fish & Wild., speaker.

Mar. 29 – Last Club Saturday morning fly tying session in 2025.

Apr. 9 - Regular meeting Rolling Meadows Clubhouse, 7 PM. Fly lines and rigging.

May 17 – Club picnic, Cape Henlopen State Park, noon.

June 11 – Casting outdoors and grilled food, Rolling Meadows Clubhouse 6 PM.

Jul. 9 – Casting outdoors and grilled food, Rolling Meadows Clubhouse 6 PM.

Aug. 13 – Regular meeting Rolling Meadows Clubhouse, 7 PM

Sep. 10 – Regular meeting Rolling Meadows Clubhouse, 7 PM

Oct. 8 – Regular meeting Rolling Meadows Clubhouse, 7 PM

Nov. 12 – Regular meeting Rolling Meadows Clubhouse, 7 PM

Dec. 10 – Regular meeting Rolling Meadows Clubhouse, 7 PM, Roy Miller speaker



Biologist Corner:

Anadromous Species

You may be asking yourself what is meant by anadromous species of fish? Anadromous species of fish are those which spawn in our freshwater rivers and streams and typically spend the first summer of their life in or near the freshwater rivers where they were born. After that first summer, most anadromous species begin moving downstream to higher salinity environments including, for many, migrating out into nearshore ocean habitats. These ocean migrants typically do not return to freshwater until they have fed and grown offshore and are mature enough to re-enter freshwater streams for spawning purposes.

What are some local examples of anadromous species? The better known ones include striped bass, American shad, hickory shad, and two species of river herring- the alewife and the blueback herring. Other anadromous species include Atlantic sturgeon and shortnose sturgeon which are both federal and state endangered species once common in the Delaware River, but now somewhat rare. Atlantic sturgeon can live 70 years and reach over 10 feet in length and weigh hundreds of pounds. We no longer have Atlantic salmon in the Delaware system, but Maine still has a remnant population, and there are even a few Atlantic salmon hanging on in the Connecticut River system.

So how far do these anadromous species migrate? In the case of striped bass, Atlantic sturgeon and American shad, some swim a considerable distance, to as far as Canada. American shad are particularly abundant in the summer in the Bay of Fundy.

Do all anadromous species migrate a long distance each year? No, some species like hickory shad probably never stray far from their natal estuary. In our case that would be lower Delaware Bay or Indian River Inlet. There are some other local species that are classified as semi-anadromous, meaning that they migrate within a particular river system up and down stream, and seldom if ever, leave that system. Some local examples of semi-anadromous species include white perch, yellow perch, and gizzard shad. These same three are able to live out their life cycle entirely in freshwater without ever migrating to salt or brackish water. That is why they are in our Delaware ponds year around. Striped bass also can become landlocked and can complete their life cycle in larger freshwater impoundments as long as they have access to freshwater rivers upstream of these impoundments for spawning purposes. These landlocked striped bass have created important sport fisheries in many of the larger freshwater reservoirs, most notably in the southeast like the Santee-Cooper river system; and due to stocking, in many other larger impoundments across the country.

Finally, just to make it a little more complex, there is another locally abundant fish that is considered catadromous. A catadromous species like American eel spend nearly all of their lives in fresh or brackish waters and then finally, when they are beginning to mature, they migrate downstream and out into the ocean to seek spawning grounds. In the case of American eels they head for the Sargasso Sea near Bermuda where they are joined by European eels. The eel larvae somehow make their way drifting shoreward and end up in our freshwater rivers and streams as glass eels where they eventually become yellow eels, which is the life stage we typically catch, whether we want to or not. The mature eels that migrate to the Sargasso Sea are called silver eels.

There is another term that lumps both anadromous species and catadromous species and that is diadromous. Do Atlantic coast diadromous species always die after spawning? No, our anadromous species are capable of repeat spawning over a number of years, each time including migrations from fresh to salt and back again, unlike the five Pacific species of salmon which die after spawning. American eels are the exception in that once they attain the silver eel stage and migrate to the ocean, they apparently die after spawning. There are a few other anadromous species like sea lampreys, but I have covered the ones most important to our fishermen.

rwm



The American shad at the beginning of this piece about anadromous species and the striped bass at the end were copied from artwork by Dwayne Raver for the DE Div. of Fish and Wildlife.

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

PROJECT HEALING WATERS FLY FISHING ♦ DOVER PROGRAM
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[Please Stay Safe](#)



If you were thinking about fishing in Canary Creek this winter, you might want to wait a bit. Roy Miller took this picture from the Canary Creek Bridge January 24, 2025. The lead picture is of Loretta Smith fishing Fresh Pond this fall.