

SALTY BYTES

Newsletter of the Saltwater Fly Anglers of Delaware



January - April, 2025 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 Holiday Banquet January 3, 2025

Club President Loretta Smith convened the festivities at the Lewes Presbyterian Church Fellowship Hall at 6 PM. Following the dinner Ron Smith rang the bell to remember Club members who passed on in 2024. Ron also said a remembrance for the noted author and fly fishing and fly tying expert Bob Popovics who was tragically killed in an accident this past year. Bob twice traveled to Delaware and presented a program to our Club. Ed Hill introduced our speaker for the evening, noted local story teller and historian Jim Duffy. Following the program the winners of the 2024 John Meagher fly tying contest were announced. Harry Glacken won first place, followed by Hans Feindt, second place; and Bob Hammond who took third place. Finally, a raffle was held of door prizes donated by the members. Everyone received something in the way of a door prize. The evening was generally considered to be a success and the program by Jim Duffy was well received. Before leaving Loretta Smith announced that beginning the next morning, our Club will be tying flies in the basement of the Lewes Presbyterian Church on Saturday mornings until the end of March, and all Club members and any guests are invited to attend regardless of whether you are new to tying or have been a fly tier for many years.



Club President Loretta Smith (left) served as “Master” of Ceremonies. Roy Miller (right) gave the invocation.



These are the entries in the John Meagher Fly Tying Contest for 2024.



This is Harry Glacken's prize winning fly.



Here are the winners of the John Meagher fly tying contest in 2024. That's Bob Hammond left, third place; Harry Glacken, center, first place; and Hans Feindt, right, second place.

The **February 2025** SFAOD meeting was cancelled due to snow. If I'm correct, I think this was the first time ever that we cancelled for a snow day.

SFAOD Meeting March 12, 2025

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

President Loretta Smith convened the meeting at the Rolling Meadows Club House in Lewes at 7 PM. Loretta then introduced our speaker, Johnny Moore. Johnny is an Environmental Scientist with the DE Division of Fish and Wildlife in the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control. His subject was shad in the Nanticoke River system and efforts at their restoration. Johnny runs the State shad hatchery on the Nanticoke River. He told us that male American shad mature at 3-5 years of age and females at 4-6 years. Both American shad and their smaller cousin, the hickory shad, are protected in the Nanticoke River system, although they are caught as by-catch in gill nets set for striped bass during the late winter/early spring striped bass commercial season. In other places in Delaware where shad are found, like the Delaware and Brandywine Rivers, the daily recreational harvest limit is two American shad. Up to 10 hickory shad may be taken in the Delaware system by hook and line. There still is a modest commercial gill net fishery for shad in the Delaware River in our state, although most landings are by-catch of the commercial gill net fishery for striped bass.

Johnny samples adult shad in the Nanticoke River and its tributary Broad Creek with an electrofisher and collects his brood stock for the shad hatchery with the same gear. In the summer he tracks the relative abundance of juvenile shad with seine net hauls. After fertilization and hatching, the fry that are produced in the hatchery are kept for 3 weeks, and then are stocked back into their river of origin. He marks the fry by immersing them in oxy-tetracycline which causes a fluorescent mark to show up on their otoliths or internal ear bones. Any adults that perish as a result of the capture and hatchery experience have their otoliths extracted and examined for marks. He

also puts a small tag in each adult fish that is released alive. He has stocked 11 million fry since 2000, and over a million in 2017 alone. His goal for operating the hatchery is to have hatchery produced fish account for less than 20% of the adult shad he examines from the Nanticoke. That would be an indicator that natural reproduction is accounting for most of the shad population in the River.

Johnny also talked about blue catfish which are becoming abundant in the Nanticoke River system. In 2019 he caught 773 in nets and by using low frequency electrofishing. The Delaware state record catfish was a blue catfish of 53 pounds and it was caught in the Nanticoke River in 2023. The Club membership was very appreciative of Johnny's talk and asked him a number of questions.

Board of Director Reports – Hans Feindt said that we have on-going meeting notices in the Coastal Point newspaper. As an indicator of the effectiveness of the newspaper publicity, we have Jim Drayton as a new member. Hans and member Steve Deathridge have been reaching out to the Cape Gazette as well. Hans said that we have our Club brochures and some of the Sussex bait and tackle stores and in some Sussex libraries as well. Our Club Board of Directors is looking into perhaps organizing a course on fly fishing using the Univ. of DE OSHER program for lifelong learning. Speaking of publicity, Club member Morgan Krell handed out some surveys on behalf of the Center for the Inland Bays for Club members to fill out and send in.

Ron Smith has Club merchandise for sale and brought examples of Club logo clothing to the meeting.

Bill O'Connor said that our Club paid membership currently stands of 62 as of this evening. This membership total should continue to build through the spring. There is an issue or two on our website that Bill will address with our website contractor.

Roy Miller said that our Newsletter is current through Dec. Within a month or so he will start working on a new newsletter.

Fishing Reports – Morgan Krell released a few striped bass from the Fenwick Ditch on an outgoing tide. He accessed the area from the parking lot at Harpoon Hanna's. He was using a ½ oz. bucktail. Apparently some fishermen are having some luck with sub-legal stripers at Cupola Park in the Indian River at Millsboro. One of the meeting attendees stated that the white perch at Greensboro, MD are starting to bite. Jim DiDonato reported catching a largemouth bass, yellow perch, crappie, and bluegill on flies in the Concord Pond spillway. He had no reports of shad being taken there yet.

Raffle - Fly tying items donated by Loretta Seibert, Clyde's widow, were put out as raffle prizes by Loretta Smith. Bernie Dormer, Jim Page, Vince Higgins, Bernie Stasko, Ron Tatman, Roy Miller, Hans Feindt, and Gordon Zavilla all took something home from the raffle drawing. After the raffle, the meeting was dismissed.

SFAOD Meeting April 9, 2025

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

Club President **Loretta Smith** opened the meeting shortly after 7 PM with some announcements. We will be raffling off two tying vices donated by Loretta Seibert, Clyde's widow, at the July meeting. There probably will be some more of Clyde's fly tying supplies raffled off in August.

After the announcements, Ed Hill introduced our speaker, Club member Bill Douwes. Bill's topic was fly fishing in still waters in S.E. Idaho. The places he has fished the last several years are agricultural reservoirs open for public fishing. Most do not have launch ramps per se, but you can put in kick boats, pontoon rafts or car top boats.

The regulations regarding outboard or electric motors vary depending on the reservoir. One reservoir even bans oars! For that reservoir, kick rafts and floats or shoreline wading would be the only options

These reservoirs are found at elevations of 5,000 to 5,900 feet. One thing these reservoirs have in common is big trout, usually rainbows, but a few also have browns. It is not unusual to encounter trout in excess of 20 inches and even a few monsters in excess of 25 inches! Although he initially tried a 4 weight rod, he soon geared up with heavier tackle. A 7-wt. is now his rod of choice on these reservoirs. Some of the favorite flies include Carey's Specials, damselfly nymphs, larger zebra midges, and balanced leeches. Regulations on catch and release of flies or artificial lures only varies depending on what is posted for each reservoir. For guidance on flies, tackle, and techniques, Bill likes the book Stillwater Fly Fishing by Devin Olsen. Lots of questions were directed to Bill during his presentation. Methods used on still waters in Idaho should be applicable to still waters in other states in the West and possibly even cold water reservoirs and lakes in the northeast.

Following Bill's presentation, there was a short business meeting. New members and visitors were invited to introduce themselves. There was Mack Marker from Smyrna and Bob Ditmars who moved here recently from FL. Bob also brought his son Rob to the meeting. Bob fly fished extensively in FL and was invited to attend our meetings after emailing with Roy Miller. Bob was referred to me by outdoor correspondent Eric Burnley.

Board of Director's reports: **Walt Clark** said that we started off the New Year with \$4,886 in our treasury which has risen to \$5,152 now after our January banquet expenses. There will be no Club meeting in May and instead we will hold our annual Club picnic in Cape Henlopen State Park on May 10 at 12:00. There will be some Club members and guests who will fish in the morning near the Cape Henlopen pier prior to making their way over to the picnic area along the ocean beach in the Park. At the picnic we will be grilling hot dogs, burgers, and bratwurst. Attendees are urged to bring a dish to share like a salad or dessert. Walt would like to get a head count beforehand so he knows how much to buy of grilling items and condiments.

Ed Hill went over programs planned for the rest of year. **Bill O'Connor** said that our membership was up to around 70 now, and our website has been updated. Bill said that our first Club fishing outing of the year is scheduled at Cape Henlopen Park next to the pier the evening of April 25. There is an evening high tide on that date.

Hans Feindt noted that our monthly meetings are now announced in the Coastal Point newspaper. We also have our Club brochures in some of the Sussex libraries and southern DE bait and tackle shops.

Roy Miller is starting on a new newsletter for the Club which he should finish this month.

Fishing Reports – Frank Danner caught bluegills, largemouth bass and two stocked rainbow trout at Unicorn Lake spillway in MD. Apparently there was a new state record northern snakehead caught in DE recently, but no one had the details. Although it was too soon at our meeting for an eyewitness report, shad fishing got underway in the spillway below Concord Pond (see pictures below).

Raffle – Winners of the raffle of Clyde Seibert's fly tying materials included: Gordon Zavilla, Mac McNaught, Mack Marker, Bernie Stasko, Tom S. Walt Clark, and Roy Miller.



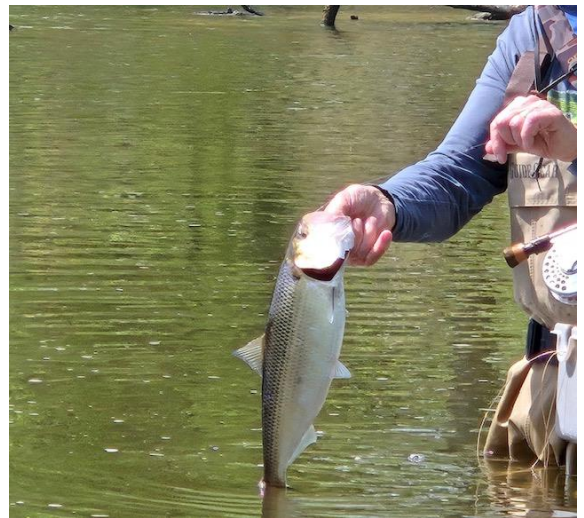
Roy Miller with a shad caught April 18. Photo by Loretta Smith.



Dick Stiefken traveled all the way from Utah to catch this shad on April 24. Photo by Roy Miller.



Bill Douwes got in on the shad action.



A typical adult American shad downstream of Concord Pond.



Bill Douwes watches Dick Stiefken land a small striped bass below Concord Pond on April 25.
Photos by Roy Miller



This American shad was caught and photographed by John McMinn.

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 cancelled due to snow.

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. Bill Douwes will speak about stillwater fly fishing.

May 17 – Club picnic, Cape Henlopen State Park, noon. There will be no regular Club meeting in May.

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, Bob Lombardi, speaker.

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

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

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

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



Biologist Corner:

While fishing for shad recently at the Concord Pond spillway into Broad Creek I had some time to kill while waiting for my two fly fishing companions. So I took the occasion to chat with a few of the other fishermen who were either bait or spin fishing in the spillway pool. One of the spin fisherman I talked to turned out to be a local celebrity of sorts. His name is Andrew Klein. Andrew told me that he is the current holder of the Delaware State Record for largemouth bass. I knew of this fish of course, but I have never met or talked to the angler who caught it. Not only did he land, weigh and release an 11 lb. 1.6 oz. largemouth bass from Waggamons Pond in Milton, DE in 2016, but his fish beat the long-time state record of 10 lbs. 5 oz. set by Tony Kaczmarczyk of Wilmington in Dec. 1980. I still have a picture of the bass caught by Tony on a live golden shiner in Andrews Lake in Kent County. I remember some griping from a few members of the Bass clubs at the time about the record breaking bass being caught on live bait, but it was certified as the state record for 36 years. If you think that catching a bass of that size is no big deal locally, then you haven't lived here long enough or talked to enough freshwater fishermen. Or perhaps you've been hanging out in FL or southern CA too much where 10 pound plus bass are not unusual.

Catching a world record largemouth bass is such a big deal that at least one author (Monte Burke) has written a best-selling book (*Sowbelly: The Obsessive Quest for the World-Record Largemouth Bass*) on the on-going effort to catch a new world record that breaks George Perry's 1932 record of 22 lbs. 4 oz. caught in Montgomery Lake in GA. During the COVID pandemic we were privileged to have Monte Burke as our speaker for one of our virtual meetings. Incidentally Monte also wrote a book of considerable interest to fly fishermen (*Lords of the Fly*) about the quest for a world-record tarpon on a fly rod.

In spite of wide-spread stocking of long-lived and fast growing Florida-strain largemouth bass by fishery managers around much of the country, no one has yet succeeded in breaking George Perry's legendary record. In southern CA reservoirs there have been some 20 plus pound largemouths taken that waxed fat eating stocked rainbow trout, but still no new all-tackle world record. I think it is safe to say that whoever finally does break this long-standing world record is likely to find both fame and fortune.

All of that aside, it was a pleasure to talk to DE record holder Andrew Klein. He was trying to catch a striped bass. The late Clyde Seibert, one of our long-time Club members, caught a very large largemouth bass in the headwaters of Red Mill Pond on a fly. Clyde claimed this fish would have broken the State Record at the time, but the fish was released and never weighed on a tournament-certified scale. He kept a fiberglass reproduction of this fish on his wall at home for years, and it is eye catching. Our Club regularly conducts chain pickerel fly fishing contests in our local ponds, and this spring we are branching out to hold a tournament where largemouth bass and crappie are the targets. Who knows, maybe one of us will break the state record for largemouth bass! Or maybe not, but at least we will have some fun trying.

rwm

The artist rendition of a largemouth bass above was painted by artist Dwayne Raver. The DE Div. of Fish and Wildlife uses Dwayne's artwork in their promotional materials.

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. Now there are 14, and I believe that number will continue to grow.

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.

With this message I'm hoping to reach the entire membership, including those who might not be there on meeting nights. Whether by phone 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

The opening picture is the pool downstream of Concord Pond taken by Roy Miller. The closing picture is Loretta Smith with her first striper of the year caught on April 25 near the Cape Henlopen Pier.

