

SALTY BYTES

Newsletter of the Saltwater Fly Anglers of Delaware



May-August, 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:

Loretta Smith – (302) 236 0894
Bill O'Connor – (302) 530-8253
Walt Clark – (610) 937 9535
Ron Smith – (301) 213-7637
Joe Helbe – (610) 310-9793 to replace Ed Hill
Roy Miller – (302) 381-3760
Hans Feindt – (410) 736-2723

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



SFAOD Picnic May 10, 2025

Here are some shots taken at our Club picnic held May 10 at Cape Henlopen State Park. There was a horseshoe throwing contest at which Roy Miller, and Jim DiDonato (shown below) teamed up against Hans Feindt and Nils Olson. Everyone agreed the picnic was a nice affair, the food was good, and the weather cooperated.



SFAOD Meeting June 11, 2025

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

The evening began at 6:00 PM at the Rolling Meadows Club House. Ron Smith and helpers grilled hamburgers and hot dogs and brought them to the Club House for members to enjoy once they were done practicing their fly casting out on the lawn with instructors Joe Helbe and Frank Danner. After the grilled items were consumed, President Loretta Smith convened the meeting inside at around 7 PM. .

Board of Director Reports – A financial report that Walt Clark prepared was distributed to anyone who wanted a copy. Our Club Treasury's closing balance at the end of May was \$5,724.31.

Hans Feindt and Steve Deathridge were successful in having our meeting notices posted in the Coastal Point newspaper. Club member Jerry Groll suggested posting our meeting notices in area fishing tackle shops, a concept that we have pursued in the past. Hans said that we have our Club brochures in some of the Sussex bait and tackle stores and in some Sussex libraries as well. Ed Hill said that the July meeting will be the same format as tonight with outdoor casting, grilled meats, and a short business meeting, again starting at 6 PM. Ed said that in August we will have author and noted Chesapeake angler Bob Lombardi as our speaker. He has published two books on Amazon having to do with fishing locations and techniques for Chesapeake Bay. In September, John McMinn will be our speaker. In October Bob Palmer and his wife and fishing companion Heather will be our guest speakers. They will suggest how to plan a fishing trip vacation with your spouse or significant other. In November Capt. Mark Sampson will again address our group and give us an update on local offshore fishing as well as winter-time fishing in the FL Keys. In December Roy Miller will address the group on the latest developments in sport fisheries management through the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission. In addition Roy will show slides of fishing trips he has taken in 2025.

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

Loretta Smith will miss next month's meeting due to a planned surgery.

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 – Loretta Smith caught a huge bluntnose stingray that was foul hooked on a fly. The next evening she caught two spot from the beach as the fog rolled in. She also caught several bluegills and a bass from a small local pond. Jerry Groll reported catching 3 redear sunfish and 10 bluegill at Waggamons Pond. Jerry also fished Chipman Pond and caught a 17" pickerel on an olive and white Clouser. Jim DiDonato fished the Marshyhope River by wading wet. He reported that there was an overabundance of filamentous algae and he caught a nice largemouth bass. Although he was targeting carp, he was not successful. He also fished the Brandywine River near the zoo after a heavy rain event. He reported seeing numerous snakeheads at the base of dam 2. Another member reported fishing Trap Pond where the filamentous algae was taking hold. He caught some bluegills. He also fished the Ausable River in NY State and caught one nice brook trout and a small rainbow from a catch and release section of the river. Mike Nichols said that Ingrams Pond will have a new boat ramp opened for use this week. He also said there will be a new boat ramp on Killens Pond in Kent County.

After the fishing reports, we solicited bids on some fly tying vices donated to the Club by Loretta Seibert, Clyde's widow. Hans Feindt bought the API vice and Jack Moore was the only bidder on the Mongoose vice. New to our group tonight was Rich Innis who plans to join our Club . He has been in this area for 5 years and fished mostly freshwater, but he wants to learn the secrets of taking saltwater fishes on a fly.



Here are some of the catches from June 9. That's a kingfish on the left and a croaker on the right. Loretta Smith is shown on the top right with a nice croaker. These pictures from the Cape Henlopen Flats next to the Cape Henlopen pier were submitted by Roy Miller.

After the fishing reports were concluded, the meeting was dismissed.

Raffle - Additional fly tying items donated by Loretta Seibert, Clyde's widow, were offered as raffle prizes. 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 July 9, 2025

Board of Directors present – Hans Feindt, Bill O'Connor, Ron Smith, Roy Miller, and Walt Clark. Loretta Smith was absent, and Ed Hill stepped down from the Board for medical reasons.

The evening began with another session of practice fly casting out on the lawn while Ron Smith, Roy Miller, and Walt Clark grilled hamburgers and hot dogs for all the attendees. After finishing off the grilled items in the Club House, Ron Smith introduced the evening's presenters. Various Board of Directors addressed basics such as fly lines, leaders, and how to rig them. **Hans Feindt** made up charts on a display board that gave particulars on what size and type of line to use for various fly fishing applications. He said the number of commercial fly lines available is somewhat bewildering and just the Rio lines alone fill three pages of the Feather Crafters fly fishing catalog. There even are fly lines intended to be used for specific species of fish like trout, large and smallmouth bass, redbass, striped bass, tarpon, bonefish, and others. Most, if not all of these fly lines will do for other species, depending on the circumstances and water temperatures encountered. There is an important difference between fly lines for warm water or tropical applications versus a fly line made for colder water conditions. Coldwater lines typically don't perform well in warmer waters and vice versa. He also talked about leader materials (monofilament or furred) and nylon or fluorocarbon tippet material and when to use each type. Next **Bill O'Connor** demonstrated some critical fly tying knots using pieces of thin rope for illustration purposes. Finally, **Ron Smith** finished with how to rig a new fly reel spool employing the arbor knot to start the backing on a fly reel. Both Bill and Ron talked about appropriate ways to join the backing to the fly line and then the tip of the fly line to the leader, and then finally the fly to the tippet. Other members offered tips on these same topics and there were general questions and comments from the audience, some of which included less experienced saltwater fly casters who probably benefitted from the collective advice.

Lastly we held drawings for some fly tying materials donated by Loretta Seibert. I believe that everyone who purchased a raffle ticket took something home. Ed Hill said that our speaker next month will be author Bob Lombardi who has published two books on fishing in Chesapeake Bay. There being no further business the meeting was dismissed a little early in order to get folks home before the predicted thunder storms moved into our area.



Hans Feindt caught this 10 inch weakfish on July 23 at a Club outing. Picture by Jerry Groll.

SFAOD Meeting August 13, 2025

Board of Directors present: Loretta Smith, Bill O'Connor, Roy Miller, Hans Feindt, Ron Smith, and Walt Clark, total attendance 29.

Speaker – Loretta Smith introduced our speaker for the evening, Bob Lombardi. Bob just published his second book through Amazon entitled: The Kayak Chronicles. A Year Fishing Chesapeake Backwater of Maryland and Virginia. This 147 page paperback is his second book on his kayak fishing experiences. The title of his first book which he published a few years ago is Kayak Fishing the Lower Eastern Shore of Maryland and Virginia. A Chesapeake Bay Backwater Kayak Fishing Guide.

If you concluded from these titles that Bob doesn't mind sharing his secrets and his favorite shallow-water fishing locations, you would be correct. Bob purchased his Hobie Fishing Pro kayak in 2018, and brought it to the meeting. It was all tricked out with an electric motor, depth finder, and rod holders. With it he explored the Chrisfield, MD waters south to the Chesapeake Bay Tunnel. He spends 99% of his time fishing waters that are 2-4 ft. deep, including lots of aquatic grass beds. His largest capture was a 46" redfish taken near the Honga River, which also broke his rod. He mainly targets redfish, speckled trout, and striped bass. He primarily uses spinning tackle, but his methods have obvious relevance to fly fishermen since he is fishing shallow water.

His latest book, the Kayak Chronicles, documents a year of fishing experiences that take you through the spring, summer, and early fall seasons. In these excursions he fished the Janes Island area off Crisfield out of the Summers Cove Marina. He likes to fish clear water areas in or near submerged vegetation. He also detailed his experiences when he launched at the Johnson's Warf boat ramp in Virginia. He found it best on a high or incoming tide.

Another location he targeted in his book is the Harborton Boat Ramp in VA. This spot has lots of submerged grass. A moving tide is usually critical to his success.

In his view, nothing in the Bay pulls harder than a big redfish. The afore-mentioned broken spinning rod is testament to that view. Bob answered a number of questions from the group and his talk was well-received.

Business Meeting – New member Jeffrey Packard introduced himself. He is from the Syracuse, NY area and has mainly fished freshwaters, but is keen on transitioning to salt water.

In the Board of Directors reports, Treasurer **Walt Clark** said our Club has a balance of nearly \$6,000. We have taken in four new members since his last report. Presently we have \$210 in our Grand Raffle kitty. We will need \$500 in order to exceed expenses for prizes in our drawing at the September Club meeting on the 10th.

Filling in for former Board member **Ed Hill** who had to step down because of health concerns, **Hans Feindt** said that our September meeting speaker will be long-time member John McMinn who will talk about his experiences fly fishing for tarpon. In October Bob Palmer will talk to us about fishing trip planning with a spouse or companion. Saltwater Captain Mark Sampson will be our November speaker. Roy Miller will sum up recent Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission management decisions as he does every December, and also do a Power Point presentation on select fishing trips he made in 2025.

We will really miss **Ed Hill** on the Board of Directors as he has been a major contributor with lining up speakers and serving as one of our more tech savvy members when it comes to computer applications and helping set up our new website. We wish him a speedy recovery from his most recent health challenges.

Ron Smith has Club merchandise for sale including micro-fiber Club shirts.

Bill O'Connor said we now have nearly 100 paid Club members.

President **Loretta Smith** reminded all of the annual One-Fly Contest on September 27. This contest will conclude with a lunch at the Rolling Meadows Club House. All fish entered must be caught by fishing on foot, thus excluding kayak and boat catches.

Fishing Reports – Bill Sperduto fished the Yellow Breeches in PA and caught 4 trout on a #16 Walt's worm.

The meeting was concluded with a raffle of some fly tying materials donated by the widow of member Clyde Seibert. Jim Page, Walt Clark, Frank VanDam, Roy Miller, Hans Feindt, Joe Helbe, and Jerry Groll all were winners.



Jim DiDonato caught this nice snakehead on a popper in the Brandywine River in Wilmington on August 28.



Ron Smith's grandson caught this striper on Ron Smith's boat under the Lewes Coast Guard Station lights the end of August. Photo by Ron Smith.

Tentative Schedule:

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.

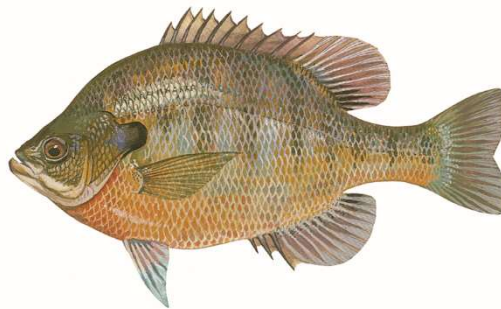
Sep. 10 – Regular meeting Rolling Meadows Clubhouse, 7 PM, John McMinn speaker.

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

Although not a Club function, the **Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission** will be holding their annual meeting this year in Dewey Beach, DE this October, beginning on the 27th and finishing on the 30th. The meeting will be held on the Rehoboth Bay side of the Hyatt Place in Dewey Beach. The Hyatt is on the south end of town on the right side of Route 1 heading south just past the Rusty Rudder. For any curious about Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission meetings, these quarterly meetings are where important management decisions are made about many of our most important inshore migratory marine species like striped bass, red drum, spot, Atlantic croaker, American shad, weakfish, and many others. Attendance is free, although seating for the general public is usually somewhat limited at Commission meetings. Roy Miller serves as one of three Delaware Commission members. Roy will summarize decisions made at this meeting when he talks to our Club on Dec. 10. Normally the Commission meets quarterly in Arlington VA, but the fall annual meeting is held at one of the Commission member states, and this year is Delaware's turn to serve as host.



Biologist Corner

bluegill

Sunfishes of DE

Maynard Raasch, in his 2003 book “Delaware’s Freshwater and Brackish-Water Fishes,” fourth Edition, Delaware Nature Society, Hockessin, DE, said there are 15 species of sunfishes in DE. Maynard, who passed away several years ago, was a chemist by education and training, and not a fishery biologist. However, he was a scientist with a near fanatical zeal for research and documentation, and he left no stone unturned or expert un interviewed in the preparation of his book on freshwater fishes of DE. So if Maynard says there are 15 species (or were when he wrote his latest edition of his book), I’m very inclined to believe him. The family Centrarchidae (sunfishes) includes such DE angling favorites as largemouth and smallmouth bass, and black and white crappie. I have dealt with these species in previous issues of this newsletter, so I will concentrate instead on those fishes most of us would readily classify as sunfishes, those pan- or palm-sized, spiny-rayed fishes that we all love to catch. For many freshwater anglers (myself included), a sunfish probably was the first fish you ever caught. To anglers in DE

and fly anglers in particular, the most important ones include bluegill, redbreast sunfish, pumpkinseed, redear sunfish, and green sunfish. There are some other members of this family in DE that have a more limited range in our state like the rock bass, warmouth, and mud sunfish; in addition to three species which are too small to be of any fishing importance like the bluespotted sunfish, the blackbanded sunfish, and the banded sunfish. These latter secretive little gems are of more interest to aquarium fanciers rather than fishermen.

To get back to the five classic sunfishes of greatest importance to Delaware anglers, a couple of these are not really native to DE. Specifically I am referring to the bluegill which was introduced to our area a long time ago, and the redear sunfish which was imported from the southern U.S. in the previous century and found its way into many of our ponds and farm ponds via stocking. The bluegill is tailor made as a fly rod quarry. It is found in just about every impoundment of any size in DE and in many of our warmwater streams. The State record for bluegill is a tie at 2 lbs. 10 oz. I remember when I verified the first of these state records when the successful angler, Arnold Harmon, walked into my office at the Division of Fish and Wildlife with a 12-pack size cooler in 1998. When I asked about the contents of the cooler he said “take a look at this” and opened his cooler. There was the biggest and darkest colored bluegill I had ever seen. I know that to a non-fisherman 2 lbs. 10 oz. doesn’t sound like much, but to a panfish fisherman like me, it was massive. I didn’t see the fish caught by Clifford Snyder in 2001 that tied the existing bluegill record, but I’m sure it was equally impressive.

What makes the bluegill special as a fly rod quarry? Some days, particularly when they are on their spawning beds, it seems like they will take any fly they can fit into their somewhat smallish mouths. The best part is when they catch you off guard and smack a surface fly or small popper when you aren’t paying strict attention. When you set the hook there will be immediate and determined resistance as the bluegill will turn its flat body perpendicular to your fly line and pull out of all proportion to its weight. On a two to five weight fly rod they really are a lot of fun. During spawning season in the spring, the males are particularly vulnerable as they tend to congregate in specific shallow areas where the males dig and guard saucer shaped depressions that they persuade the females to deposit fertilized eggs into. It is the male bluegill’s job to protect the nest from all potential predators, and they are really aggressive when doing so. The somewhat smaller females will hang near the bedding areas and also can be caught on the same flies as the males. When the male bluegills mature they turn darker and develop a small hump just behind their head. The females are lighter in color and lack the hump behind the head. In our area, they typically appear on the nests in May and spawning concludes by the end of June.

Other sunfishes like pumpkinseed also populate nesting areas like the bluegill, but perhaps a few weeks later than the bluegills. The redbreast sunfish is primarily a warmwater stream species that is most abundant in New Castle County streams like White and Red Clay Creeks and the Brandywine and Christina Rivers, as well as warmwater streams in Kent and Sussex Counties, particularly on the western side of the State. Redbreast are a great sportfish that will eat just about anything alive that will fit in their somewhat larger mouths. They will take a larger fly like a Clouser minnow or a woolly bugger on a number six streamer hook.

Introduced redear sunfish can even exceed the bluegill in size and the State record is 3 lbs. 1 oz caught by Marty Messick in 1998. I also got to check this fish in person to verify the record and it was a really impressive specimen caught in Diamond Pond. Redear are primarily bottom feeders that specialize in eating snails and small freshwater mussels. They still will take most of the same flies that a bluegill favors, but surface takes are kind of rare for this species. For redear I like to fish a sinking line to take the fly down to their level.

All of these larger sunfishes are great fun to catch. They also make fine eating, but the larger specimens are vulnerable to overfishing. The result can be a pond full of the smallest individuals, so use some constraint in how

many large ones you keep. I consider it most important to limit your fishing to catch and release when these great little game fish are vulnerable while clustered during the spring spawning season.

rwm



Redear sunfish

Illustrations of sunfish from DE Division of Fish and Wildlife files donated by artist Dwayne Raver

Here is a message to all Club members from President Loretta Smith:

Hello members:

We have some changes to the Board of Directors. Ed Hill has stepped down from the Board due to health issues. However, he will still remain as active as possible in the club. Ed has been a hard worker for the club and we thank him for his contributions and time on the Board. We hope he will be well enough to continue to participate in Club activities.

The Board of Directors may offer an appointment on the Board to a member of the club when there is a vacancy. We have offered the Board appointment to Joe Helbe and he has graciously accepted. As many of you know, Joe is one of our casting instructors for the club and comes with much experience and commitment to the club. The Board welcomes Joe.

In our last Board meeting, I felt I should step down from the Board due to health issues of my own. I was not sure I could fulfill my commitment to being the President of the club. Instead of leaving, the Board asked if I would take a 6-month sabbatical from the Presidential duties, but stay on the Board of Directors and contribute as much as possible, since I am for the time being able to. I have agreed to do so. Our Board of Directors works as a team and will continue to do so to lead and guide the club. Ron Smith or Roy Miller will lead the club meetings and Board meetings when one or the other is not present.

I look forward to seeing many of you at our upcoming meeting September 10th and at the One Fly Contest September 27th. Until then, Keep Fishing!

Loretta Smith

Board of Directors

Flip Pallot – On August 26, 2025 Phillip “Flip” Pallot passed away in Georgia. Flip was a giant in our sport of fly fishing and most of us regularly watched his TV show “Walker’s Cay Chronicles”. Although I never had the chance to talk to him, I once attended a lecture he gave on fly fishing in FL and the tropics at a fly fishing show in MD and found him to be very personable, entertaining, and quite knowledgeable. He will be missed by many. Sadly we have lost a couple of giants to our sport recently including Bob Popovics, Flip, and, of course Lefty Kreh who passed away a few years ago. These three men made major contributions to the sport of fly fishing and served as mentors and instructors to many of us through their talks, demonstrations, writings, and videos.

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 was taken on the South Fork of the North Branch of the Potomac River in WV by Roy Miller in June. Five of our members fished there in June. The closing picture also was taken by Roy on the Henlopen Flats in June, 2025 during a Club fishing outing.