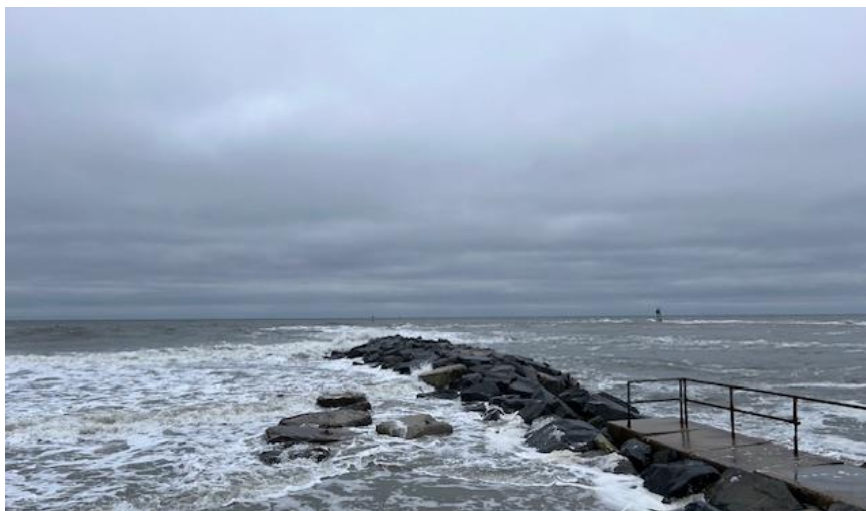


SALTY BYTES

Newsletter of the Saltwater Fly Anglers of Delaware



September to November 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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Bill O'Connor – (302) 530-8253
Walt Clark – (610) 937 9535
Ron Smith – (301) 213-7637
Joe Helbe – (610) 310-9793
Roy Miller – (302) 381-3760
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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 number or send them via email to Bill O'Connor at sfaod@outlook.com



SFAOD Meeting September 10, 2025

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

The meeting at the Rolling Meadows Clubhouse commenced at 7:04 PM with 29 in attendance.

Speaker - Our speaker, John McMinn, is no stranger to our Club as he has presented several times over the years, including serving as speaker for our annual Club banquet a few years ago. John is always welcome as a speaker, and never disappoints. His topic for this talk was Backcountry Tarpon on the Fly. Some of you will remember that John also presented to our Club back in 2017 on the general topic of backcountry fly fishing in FL with his fishing guide and friend, Bob Marvin.

John likes to fish in southwest FL, both in the clear water area in the Keys where he primarily sight fishes, and in the 10,000 Island area further up the Gulf Coast where back country fishing takes place in tannic acid-stained water which often involves blind casting at likely-looking cover.

In the 10,000 Island area, tarpon sometimes reveal themselves by rolling which is a survival trait where they gulp air into their swim bladders for additional oxygen. John characterizes rolling fish as “happy eaters” that will take a fly, whereas a fish that shows itself by splashing is usually one that is alarmed. If he sees bubbles in the water, he will cast to them because it could be a gulping tarpon. A laid-up tarpon, called a sleeper, is one that can be targeted as well. In this environment he almost always uses a floating fly line unless there is nothing happening near the surface. He doesn't strip his fly too fast like you do for bluefish. To hook a tarpon it is important to keep stripping until you come tight, and then repeatedly set the hook.

John mentioned some specific guides he has used or ones well known in the area of southwest FL including Dan Bennett at Marco Island, Kevin Mihailoff of Marco and Everglades City, Bruce Chard of Big Pine Key, and Tom Rowland of Key West.

Board of Directors Reports – Walt Clark said that at the end of August we had \$6,055 in our Club treasury. The Annual Holiday Banquet will be held on January 9, 2026. The ticket price will be \$25/person and the Club will subsidize the remainder of the expenses for the meal. In terms of our annual raffle which will be held tonight, with tonight's ticket sales we will have paid for all of our raffle prizes. Bill O'Connor said that we have 102 members included Jim Lindquist, our newest member who just moved here from NJ. Roy Miller said our Club Newsletter is up to date through the month of August. Hans Feindt said that our speakers next month will be Bob and Heather Palmer. They will talk about their experiences fly fishing the flats in Mexico, the Caribbean, and the Bahamas. Joe Helbe is our newest Board member and has taken over selling flies donated to our Club. They are priced for a bargain at \$1 each. Our One-Fly Contest will be held this month of September 27. Meet here at the Club House at 0730 and bring two identical flies with you. One will be placed in the blind drawing, and the duplicates will be saved for the first prize winner. Winners will be the largest fish and the most fish. All entries must be caught in tidal waters in Delaware. Return to the Club House at 1:30 for a lunch of pulled pork and fried chicken pieces.

We then conducted the Annual Club Raffle. Prizes and winners were as follows going from last prize to first prize:

Flies donated by Don Avondolio – Jim Drayton
Front and back stream pack – Bill Douwes
Snakehead guided fishing trip with Ted Morelock – Joe Helbe

Fishing trip with Capt. Chuck Cook – Jim Drayton yielded to Mike Nichols
Antique bamboo rod and Scientific Anglers reel – Bernie Dormer
Renzetti Traveler vice – Gordon Zavilla
Orvis Hydros 5-7 wt. reel – Brian Scott
Orvis Clearwater reel – Walt Clark
Blue Orvis Hydros reel – Jerry Groll
Orvis Clearwater 9 ft 7 wt. rod – Tom Dominick
Orvis Recon 8 wt. rod and Hydros IV reel – Loretta Smith

Fishing Reports – Frank Van Dam fished in Alaska for a week. They caught silvers, sockeyes and halibut up to 40 inches on conventional tackle. They caught salmon from a boat and also caught silvers from shore with Fish on Charters. Gary Robbins fished the Chesapeake Bay Bridge area for bluefish. There were no more fishing reports, so the meeting was concluded.

One Fly Contest – It was held this year on September 27. Our two winners were Morgan Krell who caught a 23” bluefish at Indian River Inlet and Steve Halstead who caught the most fish (2). We had about a dozen Club members participate this year. Contestants gathered for a late lunch at the Rolling Meadows Club house after the contest. Our thanks to Ron Smith for making the barbeque and to Walt Clark for picking up the fried chicken.



That's Morgan Krell on the left and Steve Halstead next to him with their gift certificate prizes. On the right is Club Founder Don Avondolio selecting his fly to use in the foreground and Ron Smith in the background.

SFAOD Meeting October 8, 2025

The meeting commenced shortly after 7 PM at the Rolling Meadows Club House in Lewes. 17 members were in attendance.

Bd. of Directors Present – Hans Feindt, Loretta Smith, Roy Miller, Ron Smith, Bill O'Connor, and Walt Clark. Joe Helbe was absent.

Roy Miller introduced our dual speakers for the evening, Bob and Heather Palmer. Bob and Heather have made 5 trips to the Bahamas, visiting 4-5 different islands, 7 visits to Belize, 3 trips to the Cayman Islands, twice to Cuba, once to Roatan off of Honduras, twice to Mexico, and 5 times to Turks and Caicos in the British West Indies. They said that the fishing in Mexico (Yucatan Peninsula) was great, but the last time their car was broken into, and equipment and supplies were stolen, so they probably won't go back there.

So how do they pick a destination to visit and fish? They rely on books like Rod Hamilton's "Do It Yourself Bonefishing." They also use internet searches and look at YouTube videos, and online fishing forums and blogs. Other criteria include: how long do they intend to stay and what is the island's infrastructure? They also use Cattaraugus Creek Outfitters and Yellow Dog Outfitters for information on where to fish. They bring up Google Earth to look for flats that appear fishable from the air. They also rely on friends they have made on their fishing trips for recent local fishing reports. Rod Hamilton's book also has a rating system for accommodations and activities for spouses of fly fishermen.

As to what species Bob and Heather target, the list includes the following in order of priority:

Bonefish – always first choice

Permit – Bob's favorite. Mexico is best for permit, in their view

Tarpon – Often found in less clear waters

Triggerfish – Heather's favorite

Barracuda – Bob prefers to use a Bob's Banger on the surface

And whatever else will take a fly

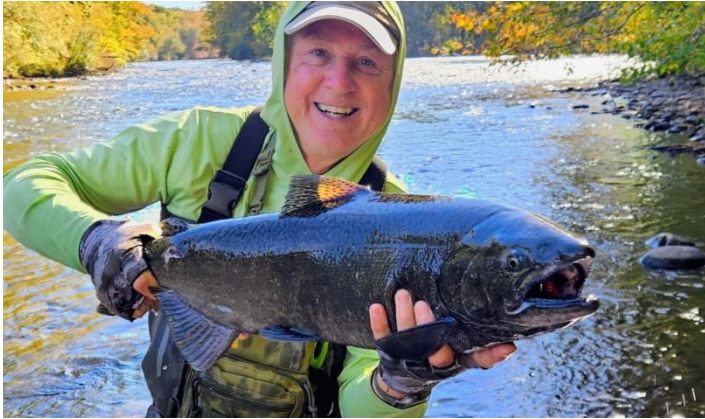
As for gear, they recommend several rods in various weights, fly reels with a good drag, a backpack for water and other supplies, good wading shoes like Sims Pursuit with neoprene socks (a must, forget about fishing in sneakers or flip flops), rain gear, waterproof fly boxes, paracord to carry their rods strung in the car, and of course, travel insurance for emergencies and cancellations. Also, wind-blown sargassum weed can be a real hindrance in that part of the world. Both speakers did a great job at tag-teaming this talk.

To ask additional questions you can ask to talk to Bonefish Bob at TCO Fly Shop in PA or email Bob at Stykbowl14@aol.com.

Board of Directors Reports: Hans Feindt said that Capt. Mark Sampson of Ocean City, MD and the FL Keys will be our speaker in November. His specialty is fishing (including fly fishing) for sharks. Loretta Smith said that we will accept nominations for the 2026 Board of Directors at the November meeting. Our Club salt water fly tying contest judging will be held at the December meeting. October 25 is the date for our Club Pickerel fly fishing contest. Thus far there haven't been but a couple of members who have shown interest. Walt Clark said that we have \$5,761 in our treasury as of the end of September. Our annual banquet will be held the evening of January 9 at the Lewes Presbyterian Fellowship Hall, and tickets are \$25 per person. Roy Miller said that the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission will hold their annual meeting in Dewey Beach this month on Oct. 27-30 at the Hyatt Place. Technical sessions are open to anyone at no charge. Striped bass management will be discussed on Wed. after 10 AM. Ron Smith has Club merchandise for sale, but his inventory is presently low on the number of Club hats to sell.

Fishing Reports – Morgan Krell has been fishing the Indian River Inlet. There are bluefish on the in-coming tide and at the outgoing tide from Bubble Gum Beach. Ron Tatman fished for marlin at the Baltimore Canyon. They also fished around the floats from sea bass and lobster pots and he caught five dolphin (Mahi) on flies. Another Club member said he caught two spotted sea trout near Brunswick, GA on a very short fishing trip. Morgan also

fished at Montauk, NY twice. He caught false albacore and a schoolie-size striper while fishing at night. He said that the sand eels have just started to be active. Roy Miller won the 50/50 raffle.



Here is Jim DiDonato with pictures of chinook salmon he caught on a fly in the Salmon River near Pulaski, NY this Octoberl.



The club Pickerel Fly Fishing Contest was cancelled on Oct. 25 due to a relative lack of participants. Roy Miller and Loretta Smith went fishing anyway on Red Mill Pond and Roy caught this nice crappie as well as a number of other pan fish.



There was a good-size audience in the back of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission Meeting on Oct. 29 to hear the deliberations of the Striped Bass Management Board at the Hyatt Place in Dewey Beach, DE.

SFAOD Meeting November 12, 2025

Board of Directors Present – Joe Helbe, Hans Feindt, Loretta Smith, Roy Miller, Ron Smith, and Walt Clark. There were a total of 23 members in attendance.

Nominations were solicited for the 2026 Club Board of Directors. Bill Douwes moved and Bernie Stasko seconded that the existing slate of directors be re-nominated for 2026. The motion passed unopposed and nominations were closed.

Speaker - Ron Smith introduced his friend, Capt. Mark Sampson, as our speaker. Mark has been a charter captain since 1987. He fishes out of Ocean City, MD and the FL Keys. He authored a book entitled: Modern Sharking. He tags every shark released on his boats. He invented the blocking rig with a perpendicular piece of plastic pipe on the leader designed to prevent sharks from swallowing the hook, thus reducing hook and release mortality. Mark fishes offshore with a 40' Fish Finder and inshore with a 17 ft. Maverick boat. He fishes and guides in FL in March and April. His wife holds numerous fly rod world records. He specializes pretty much in shark fishing, including fly fishing for sharks.

His season in Ocean City begins in May. He fishes mostly 20-30 miles offshore, but has fished on occasion much closer to the beach. There are about 14 species of sharks generally found in our area. Data on each shark caught on his boat is recorded. He cooperates with Oearch on his shark research and uses tags supplied by the National Marine Fisheries Service as well as private entities. He typically catches 500 sharks per year on his boat using the above referenced blocker rig and circle hooks. Some of his tags have been in sharks for 30 some years. Each tagged fish is injected with tetracycline to reduce infections. He uses basic passive tags where the shark has to be re-captured to determine when and where it was tagged, and how much it had grown since tagging. He also employs a few satellite tags (at \$2,000 each). The batteries for these last 1-2 years. Some of these include Pop-off tags which store data that is uploaded when the tag detaches and floats to the surface, and SPOT tags that transmit data whenever the shark breaks the surface. He also uses acoustic tags which are surgically implanted in the stomach cavity that can be detected by acoustic listening stations attached to buoys deployed up and down the

coast. These tags allow real-time tracking of shark migrations. All of Mark's fishing clients are encouraged to participate in the data generating process. The Club members thanked Mark for his interesting visual presentation.

Board of Director Reports – Walt Clark said that we have \$5,805 in our Club treasury as of the end of October. Our January 9 banquet will be catered by Light House Catering and features an enhanced menu this year. Walt said he is accepting Club dues (\$30 per year) for the New Year any time now. We will have our first Saturday fly tying session on January 3, 2026 from 9-12 at Lewes Presbyterian Church. The speaker for our December 10 meeting will be Roy Miller who will give his annual slide update on Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission meetings as they relate to 2026 fishing regulations. Roy also will show some slides of fishing trips he made in 2025. He said that he plans to start a new Club newsletter in the next few weeks. Bill O'Connor said to check the Club website for news, happenings, and the calendar for the New Year. Joe Helbe has flies available for purchase at \$1 each.

Fishing Reports - Jim Drayton said that he and his family including grandchildren went fishing for rockfish in Chesapeake Bay using conventional tackle and small live spot for bait. They caught 22 stripers and kept 11 to eat. They fished under the Chesapeake Bay Bridge. Hans Feindt said he visited Millsboro Pond 2 weeks before our scheduled pickerel tournament (which was cancelled due to a relative lack of participation) and found it to be very weedy. A few weeks later it was better and he caught a nice bass and a good size pickerel. Another member said that he fished the Little Red River in Arkansas and did well on rainbow trout fishing egg patterns below an indicator and also fishing midge flies. Jim DiDonato went to Waggamons Pond and found it full of weeds. He also related that he fished the Salmon River at Pulaski, NY and caught 3 chinook salmon on flies. He plans to take his Project Healing Waters members up there in the future for a fishing outing.

Roy Miller won the 50/50 raffle again this month. He donated most of the winnings from the Raffle back to the Club.

Tentative Club Schedule:

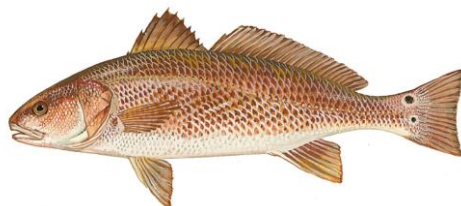
Sep. 10 – Regular meeting Rolling Meadows Clubhouse, 7 PM, John McMinn speaker.

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

Jan. 9 – Club holiday banquet, 6 PM Lewes Presbyterian Church Fellowship Hall



Red Drum

Biologist Corner –

I have written about red drum in this column before (most recently spring 2022). So what is new that this species is deserving of additional ink? Draft Addendum II to Amendment 2 to the Red Drum Fishery Management Plan administered by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission was approved in October 30 of this year at the

ASMFC meeting held in Dewey Beach, DE. What's new is that red drum are now being managed by the Commission as two stocks: a southern one from South Carolina through Florida's Atlantic Coast and a northern stock from North Carolina north to and including New Jersey. Overfishing is occurring on the southern stock, meaning too many are being removed by fishing; and the stock is overfished, meaning the spawning stock is less than it should be.

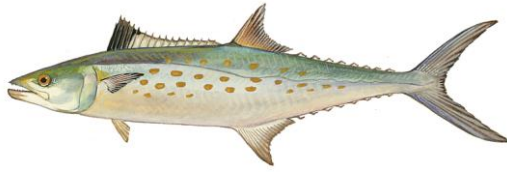
At the October ASMFC meeting, the states voted to adjust the present set of governing management measures for this species. In the southern region, an SPR of 30% was approved. What this means is that the southern states as defined above will submit measures aimed at ending overfishing by adoption of measures to achieve, as a minimum, a stock that is 30% of what it would be without any fishing induced mortality. The ultimate target goal will be to attain 40% of what the stocks would be in the absence of fishing.

This is a big deal in SC, GA, and FL when you consider that red drum arguably are the premier migratory game fish inhabiting near-shore marine waters in these states. Esteem for red drum in the south rivals the importance of striped bass in northern states.

The northern states have less red drum catch data available and fishing mortality rates cannot be reliably estimated at this time. In an abundance of caution, the northern states will continue to use 40 % of maximum spawning stock biomass as the target. The states of MD and VA and the Potomac River Fisheries Commission will implement the same measures, namely a legal slot length limit of 18"- 26" and a 3 fish/person/day harvest allowance for recreational fishermen. Delaware and New Jersey will keep their existing limits for the time being until the Red Drum Technical Committee recommends new minimum measures for these two states. Catches of red drum in DE and NJ are considered negligible at present. The ASMFC uses the term *de minimis* to characterize these small catches from any states that do not materially affect the overall health of the red drum stocks in the northern region. Most likely Delaware and New Jersey will meet the standard for *de minimis* when it comes to red drum. Certainly that will be the case for Delaware as taking a red drum in Delaware is still considered a rather rare event. With an existing legal slot of 20" - 27" the DE state record red drum of 75 lbs. caught by James Vandetti in 1975 is likely to stand unchallenged for the foreseeable future. However, with climate change, we may yet begin to see more red drum in our area as coastal waters continue to warm.

Another more southern species expected to show up in our coastal waters with increasing frequency is Spanish mackerel. The Commission, in conjunction with the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council, has a management plan for Spanish mackerel in nearshore coastal waters. Delaware presently has fairly liberal limits for Spanish mackerel (14" minimum size and 15/person/day recreational harvest limit). Even if there were no daily harvest limits on Spanish mackerel in DE, I doubt that anyone is catching that many in a day.

The Spanish mackerel's larger cousin, the king mackerel, is not presently regulated in Delaware and there is no size limit or daily harvest limit in effect. This highly migratory offshore species is managed by NOAA Fisheries and the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council. In federal waters (where most king mackerel are caught) the minimum size limit is 24 inches fork length (to the fork of the tail) and 3 fish/person/day. To be on the safe side, Delaware offshore fishermen are advised to abide by the federal regulations. Neither Spanish nor king mackerel are presently overfished. If you haven't caught either one, both of these species have small but sharp teeth so bite tippets are advised.



Spanish mackerel



king mackerel

Fish pictures from DE Div. of Fish and Wildlife files by artist Duane Raver

rwm

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.

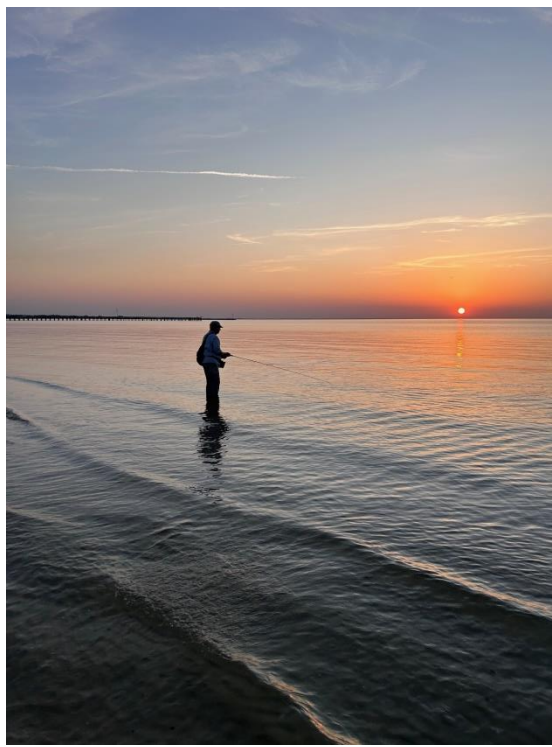
Where the Dover Program was once sponsored by SFAOD, there hasn't been a formal relationship for several years. Several members of SFAOD have volunteered – and continue to do so – over the years to make the program a success. The one major thread that bonds our groups is our love of fly fishing. Because 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

Please Stay Safe



Did it seem to you like the wind blew hard nearly every day this fall? Roy Miller took the opening picture of the North Jetty at Indian River Inlet (where presumably Morgan Krell caught his winning bluefish in this year's One-Fly Contest) during a typical windy day on Oct. 14. The closing picture, taken by Roy Miller, is of Bill Douwes fishing the Henlopen Flats on September 2, 2025.