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ARCHIVED FISHING REPORTS

Report from Fletcher's Cove, April 6, 2009

Into every Spring, a little rain must fall. As this is written, the Potomac at Fletcher's is at a beautiful, moderate state for boating and fishing. But that could change. In a matter of hours. Or not.

Ah... beauty and the beast, the way of Washington in the Spring. The fairest season never comes easily to the Nation's Capital. Just as the buds swell in February, an ice storm socks us in the kisser. Then, as the ices of March approach, a blanket of snow tries to bury all evidence of hope. The cold, jagged, dagger of Winter never pulls out of the mid-Atlantic cleanly.

Just two months ago the canal, towpath and parking lot at Fletcher's were skating rinks, locked in a sheath of water-turned-to-steel. A little over a month back, a fluffy coating of snow gave notice that Spring was NOT just around the corner.

Now, finally, the door seems to be cracked, the corner turned, and the beast tamed by all the beauty around us. A swipe or two may be left, but the daffodils, cherry blossoms and magnolia trees create a Platte of promise not to be denied. If you are reading this, and have not made the trip down to the Tidal Basin and East Potomac Park to see the trees in full glory... go, soon! Never is beauty so stunning, yet so delicate, as on a blossoming cherry tree. Our sister boathouse at the Tidal Basin will rent you a paddle-boat for a unique perspective on the gift from Japan that keeps on giving!

The fishing at Fletcher's Cove has been sputtering along until this past week. Finally, the water temperature has parked above the 50 degree mark that signals more consistent opportunity. Hickory shad are now established in the eddies and chutes off the main current. Use loudly colored darts, cast far, retrieve slowly. Keep your eyes and mind open. The fisher-person in the next boat over may have a subtle trick that spells success.

The dedicated white perch angler is a respected and revered individual by old timers at Fletcher's. The perch still come to our little slice of the river, but it takes work and patience to find the pockets of these tastiest of fish. Most fishermen seek out the more glamorous species, eschewing the bread-and-butter satisfaction of pulling up two jumbo perch from the deep. My fondest, if not most exciting, fishing memories are of filling a bucket with perch. It's elemental. The proud, smiling kids in the photo are Conor (on the left) and Harrison (on the right), whose dads have passed on the love of "perchin" to the next generation. Congratulations, guys! White perch will hopefully swarm around Fletcher's through part of May.

White (or American) shad should join the mix any time now. When you see dogwoods start to bloom, the shad will be high in the rivers, available to those who want to enjoy some of the cleanest, simplest and most exciting fishing a few bucks can buy. You don't need fancy tackle, you don't need lots of experience, you don't need to think too much, and by all means, you can't catch them on the telephone! Take a chance... it's a fool's game to try to time fishing perfectly. "Reel life" is a gamble. Roll the dice.





Yes, there are some big stripers roaming the waters off Fletcher's cove. The legal season for possession of a striper in D.C. is after May 16th. Before that, if you hook a striped bass, please let it go with a minimum of handling. Letting a fish flop around in the boat or on shore while you unhook, weigh or measure or take a photo, makes a pretty safe bet that the fish will not survive after release. I'm the last person to glorify rockfish above the others, as has so often been done to the detriment of other mid-Atlantic fisheries, but they are majestic fish and deserve respect and TLC.

A heads-up: The Jim Range National Casting Call kids fishing day will be April 26th, mid-day, (details in a later report). Like many of you, I have a child who lives long hours in cyber-space, so I feel deeply the value of getting kids out in the atmosphere, feet on the earth, eyes squinting from the sun rather than cathode rays or LCD's. We have the basic stuff you need to get a kid out fishing. You don't need much and it doesn't have to be a complex event to be meaningful! I changed a tire with my son the other day, and he went on and on to his mother about what a good time it was! Voila! Instant parent-of-the-year.

D.C. fishing permits are available at Fletcher's store. Ten dollars for residents, thirteen for non-residents. Those under 16 or over 65 years of age do not need a fishing license in D.C. waters. Fletcher's will try to be open every day through summer, with rentals conditional on weather and river levels. Hope to see you soon!

Dan

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