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## FISHING REPORT

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### Report from Fletcher's Cove - April 26, 2011

Mother nature giveth and mother nature taketh away. The bountiful fishing season that was just blossoming the week of April 10th came to a screeching halt late in that same week. Three rainstorms, all concentrated in different parts of the watershed, conspired to send torrents of water down the Potomac. While the fish are still there, no reasonable way to actually angle for them with a rod and reel existed. It has been two weeks now, and while the river is fishable from the shores around Fletcher's Cove, we are still in the "hoping stage" for later this week regarding rowboat rentals.

The fish have been there, performing the rites of spring, protected from the human angler. Good for them. Not good for business. I want to stress the point of not giving up on the season. There are waves of each species of fish that travel up the Potomac and this mid-grade flood merely cut out one slice of that pie. Barring a bad heat wave or more flooding, there will be many weeks of good angling potential at Fletcher's Cove before the relaxed, settled slowness of summer. Just today, some of our regular shoreline anglers were catching hickory shad, perch and catfish. Faithful fisher-people know that angling is more about hope than harvest. Making a cast is akin to planting a seed... you can't know what bounty may appear.

Alex Binsted has been a young man on a personal angling quest for two years. Alex regularly tangles with just about all the species that inhabit the waters around Fletcher's Cove. Even with this season's handicapped spring he has caught and released several very large strippers, buckets of perch and enough shad to fill a rowboat. Large and small mouth bass are his specialty. When he fishes, I expect to see results! But one newcomer on the scene has eluded his every effort: Last year, Alex was in a positive funk over his inability to hook and land one of the bully fish in our waters. Snakehead fever got the best of him.

Today, in an ironic twist of angling fortune, Alex got one small measure of revenge. Seeking a few baitfish with a dip net in Fletcher's Cove this morning, Alex and Mike Bailey spotted a snakehead in the shallows. While Mike maneuvered the boat close to the prey, Alex, with net in hand at the bow, lunged at just the right moment and finally captured his nemesis in a way he would not have imagined. Score one for Alex. (P.S. to other anglers... there have been numerous snakehead sightings near Fletcher's this week as the high water recedes.)

Congratulations to all those involved in organizing this year's "Jim Range National Casting Call," held April 15th and 16th. Although the river was too high for boats to venture out, gung-ho anglers fished from the shore, traded stories, perused demonstrations and generally had a good time. Jim Cummins of the Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin planked shad and fried roe. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Trout Unlimited, D.C. Department of the Environment and other conservation organizations had educational displays. A conservation award was bestowed on Joe and Ray Fletcher for their lifetimes of caring for and working on the Potomac. A special feature this year was boat-builder Tom Egeberg. Tom came all the way from the Eastern Shore with the supplies needed to build a wooden boat, similar to Fletcher's boats, right in our grassy circle (You can see one at [www.egeberg.com](http://www.egeberg.com)). A steady downpour greeted Saturday morning's "Family and Youth Fishing Day." Too bad, but many determined souls braved the elements to make the best of it. Kids did indeed catch some bass, pumpkinseeds and catfish in the canal. Kudos to them! And a pointed note of gratitude to the maintenance staff of the C & O National Historic Park who really worked hard to clean up our flood plain landscape before the event. You guys are, indeed, appreciated.



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[Check out Dan's article on Fletcher's Cove in the March issue of The Buzz](#)  
(pages 11-12)



Alex Binsted, with Mike Bailey, shows off his prize.  
(The fish was cleaned and eaten... yummmie.)  
photo by Dan Ward



How NOT to fish at Fletcher's Cove!  
(photo by Dan Ward)

I need to send a sincere thank you to David Gwynn, who many times has "come over the hill" to lend Fletcher's a hand in an hour of need. David is an old Palisades Neighborhood boy, an ex-employee of Fletcher's from the '60's and '70's and one of Washington's premier anglers. He works hard and fishes hard with the heart of an environmentalist and the care of a brother to those around him. Sunday morning, April 17th was a time of crisis for Fletcher's. We needed the cavalry to come over that hill, and it did, in the form of David.

No matter how structured a business like Fletcher's is, nothing substitutes for the care and concern of the human element. No level of planning or practice can guarantee that things will work out as desired. Early on that Sunday morning, the Potomac rose menacingly fast in the darkness. Much faster than had been predicted by all the computer models from the day before. At daybreak, the currents around our dock and boats were strong, and large trees and pieces of debris were torpedoing its sides. As employees showed up to help save our dock and boats, we all knew it was a race against time before the power of the river took control. As my mood darkened, I looked up the hill to see David coming down to our aid. David used to work the dock and I know he felt the call, not from my phone, but from his heart. David has "river sense," an uncommon blending of common sense with much time on and by the water.

With the teamwork of Ray Fletcher, Paula "the dock lady," Alex Binsted, myself and David, we bailed and corralled 34 boats, packaged up the dock and moved it to safe haven in the more protected water of our cove. I don't think that we would have made it without the efforts of every person there. So, thank you to all, and especially to David who helped, not because it was his job, but because he cared.

Fletcher's hopes to be back in the boat rental business in short order. But as the river will dictate to us, not the other way around, call for current information. A re-start to great fishing is ahead of you! Historically, shad, perch, herring and stripers run all through May and, with a bit of weather moderation, into June. **Striped bass season starts May 16th**, so get your D.C. permit before the last minute. We have bait, we have tackle and we have advice from people with that "river sense" referred to earlier. Come lend us your ear and spend a few bucks!

Happy fishing!

Dan



Floodwaters creep ominously up the road at Fletcher's Cove.

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