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## ARCHIVED FISHING REPORTS

Report from Fletcher's Cove, April 29, 2007





I'm gonna' say it without fear of hyperbole... last week was the greatest week of shad fishing in anyone's memory. I won't say ever, because, to a historian who dislikes modern day media hype, "ever" is a carelessly used concept. I'll bet there were Native Americans who had some bountiful days pulling shad out of fish traps and scooping them up from chutes along the Potomac. Commercial guys used to fight sinking their gill nets when they packed full of big roe shad. That was fishing too.

But as far as sport fishing is concerned, days like last Wednesday are as good as it gets. More than a few customers told me their arms were tired from catching fish. From the other side of the counter, I would have to prompt people to speak. Eyes glazed over. Regular river-rat fishermen like Mike "the animal" Bailey, possibly hit three figures with catch and release glee. Lucky casual anglers who may have never caught a shad before had a religious conversion. I just love it when that happens. Shad fishing is as pure and clean as angling gets. Easy enough for beginners, complex enough to always be learning anew. Don't scream too loudly you dry-fly trout guys, you'll scare away your Brookie.

American and hickory shad are still off limits for the stringer, but I am confident that at least several fish in the six-pound plus range were caught between Monday and Friday last week. The photo above shows one of these beauties, caught and held (out on the water) by Mike Alper. Mike knows shad fishing like Stradivarius knew violins. Art, craft and execution one and the same. When my buddy Mark Binsted and I would go out on the river in the seventies, we would always love to fish close to Mike. Where he was, shad were sure to be. Also, in the interest of full disclosure, we considered Mike the "playboy fisherman", the "Hugh Hefner" of anglers. Often, pretty girls who liked to sunbathe in a very European way would accompany Mike on his fishing trips. If the fishing was slow, well at least one could admire the naturally beautiful surroundings!

With temperate weather and modest rainfall, shad fishing could extend all the way through May and into June. Let's cross our fingers. The above mentioned Mike Alper once boated twenty American Shad on the FOURTH OF JULY! Fletcher's has plenty of shad darts and light spinning outfits for sale. Fish early on weekdays if you can, it's a little crazy on busy weekends.

Other fishing came around nicely last week too. White perch hunters were on to some good schools by mid week and a fair number of jumbos were mixed in with the tasty small and medium fish. Perch are one of the triumvirate of finest eating fish caught at Fletcher's. Fortunately for those who like to occasionally take home a meal, all three can be kept within the guidelines prescribed by D.C. Fisheries. (The others are small mouth bass and walleye). Perch can be caught bottom fishing with bloodworms or minnow like lures bounced above a heavy sinker. Displayed herein, a meal's worth of perch-in-bucket caught by Joe Fletcher on Thursday. Most years, there is a big school of perch that migrates up to Fletcher's around the first week of May. Let's look forward to that with optimism. With a little patience, perch are easy to clean for the frying pan. (see photo)

Tub-sized catfish just keep finding their way onto fisherman's lines. I am predicting a fifty pounder before the season wanes. We need to buy a new scale. The photo above shows old amigo Jose Escobar sittin' with a fat cat goin' for a ride. He has caught and released many, many fish, so lets not begrudge him this one to show off. Sonny Robinson is hoisting a big sister cat. We affectionately call Sonny's Dad "the lucky fisherman." Like father, like son?

Striped bass season starts Tuesday, May 1st in D.C. Strippers have been caught back to March, but we hope to see a bigger push of fish in the coming weeks. Check at Fletcher's store for specific regulations.

Today was National Casting Call family day at Fletcher's Cove. Sponsored by the American Fly Fishing Trade Association, The National Park Service and Guest Services, Inc., the event celebrates getting youth out in the sun, on the water, soaking up nature and the comraderie of fishing. If you missed it, don't hesitate to create your own family day, fishing or otherwise, at Fletcher's.

Dan

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