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Report from Fletcher's Cove - May 11, 2010

As the Potomac shad run winds down through mid May, there are anglers whose perseverance and patience bring late season rewards. Those halcyon April days when hickory shad were easy, and seemingly everywhere, are just a memory. Now is the time for a fisherman whose skills transcend the ordinary. Someone not merely skilled, but also possessing experience and faith. A person with perspective, who enjoys not only the fruits of angling, but also the art.

I speak of one whose name you have seen here before. He is the quintessential fisherman, and a week or so ago another angler who had watched him referred to him with a moniker so appropriate that I was ashamed I hadn't thought of it myself! Mike Alper... Fletcher's own "*shad whisperer*."

Last week, while most shadders had packed up their darts, Mike slipped out several times to favorite spots in view of the tackle shack. He then proceeded to give a quiet clinic on the old ways of set-line shad angling. On Friday, his reward was 16 big Americans. On other days, the conditions were tough and the shad were few, but discouragement rarely enters Mike's state of mind. After all, it is part of Fletcher lore that one year, long ago, Mike caught a mess of shad on the 4th of July.

We love to see Mike with every visit, not only because he grounds us, but also because his lovely wife, Dakota, is as good a brownie baker as Mike is a fisherman. Dakota... let's make a deal... we'll keep the boat ready for Mike, you keep baking those brownies, please!

The Potomac at Washington can produce some amazing fish. A couple of examples I remember include a 4 pound, 8 ounce, rainbow trout caught on a Doll Fly near Chain Bridge back in the 1980s and a 2 pound-plus brook trout caught in the Tidal Basin. You read correctly; brook trout, Tidal Basin. Who would have imagined that? I also recall an 18 pound tiger muskie from "Big Eddy," a cove near Chain Bridge.

The new kid on the block is the snakehead. Just yesterday, Ryan Jenkins hooked and landed a 30 inch snakehead that must have weighed ten pounds. Unusual-looking is a kind way of describing the appearance of this fish. Paula, our "dock-lady" proceeded to clean the fish, as reports contend they are delicious. Well, let me just say, vegetarians unite! I'd rather watch an episode of "Grey's Anatomy." Seriously, it was not a pretty sight. I'm waiting for the chef's report...

With the District Fisheries Department taking surveys using a specialized electro-shocking sampling boat, rare fish are seen that otherwise might never be caught by an angler. Recently, another beautiful muskie was shocked up in a survey near Fletcher's Cove. See the attached photo.

Big, big catfish are jumping on the bait recently, and I suspect a 60 pound-plus blue cat will make an appearance soon. See the attached photo of a 48 pound bruiser caught a few weeks back.

The white perch run was a good one this spring, the first time I can say that in a few years. Not as many folks fish for perch as used to, but they can be so satisfying to catch, like the bread and butter you crave during an otherwise "fancy meal." Nathan Heath knows where to find big perch and one fair day recently he traveled out with young Tyler Moore, the son of Angelo Moore. Angelo and Nathan filled many a bucket with perch before Angelo's untimely passing. (See the April 14th, 2008 report.) Now, as you can see, Tyler has taken up where his father left off. Nice one, young man; your Dad would be proud!

Fletcher's hopes to soon be renting canoes and kayaks along with our rowboats and bikes. Our



A 48 pound early spring catfish.
Photo sent by Timothy Creasman



D.C. Fisheries personnel with a muskie
captured above Fletcher's Cove

limited river dock space and Potomac water levels or winds sometimes restrict canoe and kayak trips to the C&O Canal. The canal has been under maintenance and was drained this spring, but should be re-watered soon, we hope! It is a beautiful place to paddle and a great place for kids to fish. Please call 202-244-0461 for current conditions and availability.

Thanks for reading, we hope to see you at The Cove.

Dan



Tyler Moore with a 12.5 inch jumbo perch below Fletcher's.
Photo taken by Nathan Heath

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