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ARCHIVED FISHING REPORTS

Report from Fletcher's Cove, June 30, 2009

As Ray's zinnias open into a rainbow of colors, the world around our tackle shack passes into a summer place of warm river breezes and dappled sunlight along the C&O Canal. Gone are the crowds of pre-dawn fishermen anxious to get that one spot where they just know "the big one" lays in wait. Now come the more laid-back anglers, the casual kayakers and kids, joyfully free from the confines of the school house.

After weeks of murky, fast flowing water, the Potomac is finally at a steady, seasonal level. The persistent rains from early May until last week really had our fish seeking customers in a funk. Even on days when we could rent out the tile red rowboats that dot the river so often, the water was like a spilled stream of coffee from some unseen giant upstream. That does not make for good fishing, even when the fish are there.

Now, the river is in good shape, and quickly the positive effect on fishing can be witnessed. Mike Alper, (to call him an expert angler would qualify one as a master of understatement), caught five different species of fish during a day of trolling the deep waters. There were the nine legal size bass, including seven smallies, four striped bass, two of legal size, two catfish of about ten and twenty pounds, and one 19 inch walleye as a tasty bonus. I'm not really sure he kept any of the fish as Mike is one who fishes to feed his soul rather than his stomach.

I'm confident in making the claim that the last American shad of the season was caught by Mark Binsted during the first week of June. Mark (who, like me is a disciple of Alper), never gives up hope of catchable shad until after the 4th of July. To catch one of the last shad of the season has become a bigger badge of honor than to catch one of the first few. This is because nowadays, so many anglers have so little patience, combined with so little time. When the shad run starts to wane, long before it is "over", people move on to something else. Fishing is commonly viewed as a quick investment with hope of a big payoff. If that does not materialize, then on to the next "opportunity." It is an unfortunate attitude, but most of us can relate to the tendency. Ideally, fishing should be like the old carnival game where you reach into the dark bag of goodies, not knowing what you are going to pull out. The real fun is in the reach, not the pull.

One surprise "goodie" that was pulled out of the river last weekend was an impressive and pre-historic looking, long-nose gar. (Also called a spotted gar.) The proud angler was Jose Escobar, a regular among our shore fishermen. Gar, although seen commonly at Fletcher's in the summer, are rarely caught due to the long, narrow mouth which is all bone and no lips.

A feat of angling talent was turned in by young Nathan Sharp, who recently caught this jumbo sized catfish on six-pound test mono. The fish spooled much of his line in the current before turning and giving Nate a chance to land the whiskered bottom dweller. Congratulations, Nate.

As summer progresses, I'm sure there will be some more surprises in store for us around Fletcher's Cove. There are at least one-hundred tagged snakeheads swimming the waters of the Potomac at Washington. If you catch one, please keep it and contact the number on the plastic tag in the fish. The D.C. Fisheries Department and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service want to know where these newcomers roam and how quickly they are growing.



Nate Holding Catfish



Photo by Kate Langford

We welcome you to visit Fletcher's and the lovely C&O Canal Park. By foot, bike, roller-blade or vehicle, it's worth the effort to find.

Dan



Boats During High Water in May



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