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APRIL 22, 2012

Into every life, a few raindrops must fall. As the patter of rain is heard on my sky-window, I am reminded of just what a wonderful April of fishing Fletcher's Cove has experienced. Despite the frequent March-like breezes, day after day of warm sunshine and a gentle river current has resulted in great angling opportunities. Hickory shad, white perch, big blue catfish and a fair sprinkling of striped bass have bent the angler's rod often this topsy-turvy spring. Our mid-Atlantic landscape and rivers really do need a life-infusing dose of rainfall; however, I'm always thinking "be careful what you wish for," as in D.C. we seem to be prone to extremes in all things meteorological (and political)!

After an extended run of hickory shad which continues to this day, we at the Cove are waiting and hoping for the expected push of American shad, which usually comes in mid-April. Historically, the run of whites lasts well into late May, so there is hope for a long period of fishing yet to come. Water temperature, river flow and just how many of the shad do their spawning downstream will determine the bounty available at Fletcher's. After the ease with which seasoned anglers catch hickory shad, there is a tendency to lose sight of the fact that American shad rarely are caught in such quantity. But the bruising battle put up by a slab-sided white of, say, four pounds or so, is a knee-shaking angling experience to be sure. The fight of an American shad mimics the strength of the American spirit... it runs deep and has staying power. It has been a few years, but I still draw on the memory of a big American shad diving out into the depths of the Potomac's channel, my drag spinning, line disappearing and rod nearing an apparent breaking point. It always seems an American shad "knows" what to do to elude capitulation. Although giving human characteristics to a fish might seem silly, the American shad seems to know just what to do to make US feel vulnerable while it battles away.

That dedicated small band of serious white perch anglers have worked hard to hit the jackpot and fill coolers with what many consider the most delectable eating fish of the Chesapeake region. Beyond their consumption quality, to those who love to fish for white perch there is something intangibly satisfying about the process of bottom fishing for perch. There is a primal aspect to dropping your sinker to the bottom, imagining the unseen school of stately silver perch in the deep, feeling them attack your bait, lifting your rod-tip at just the right moment to hook one or two of the scrappy fish and then cranking them up to daylight. Truthfully, the best perch fishermen I've known are, to me, the epitome of true anglers. Hope, desire, patience, knowledge, technique and timing all come to reside in a perch angler's mental tackle box. To each their own, but I've met many anglers who have fished the far corners of the earth and battled exotic game fish but could not catch a mess of jumbo perch to save their lives!

Striped Bass season begins May 16th and lasts through December 31st. Each licensed angler is allowed two fish per day, 18 to 28 inches, only one of which can be up to 36 inches. **Possession of blueback herring, or alewife caught in D.C. waters is illegal in 2012.**

There have been impressive rockfish caught (and released), but no concentration of fish as in some years, when the spring came in a more typical way. The diminished number of baitfish, including herring, alewife, menhaden and small white perch is a real concern, as these are the prime food stock for the striped bass. Something to note is the fact that it is no longer legal to catch and keep ANY herring in the District of Columbia. We can sell frozen herring at our tackle shack, which are purchased from a legal, sustainable fishery in Maine. Long gone are the days when Fletcher's could

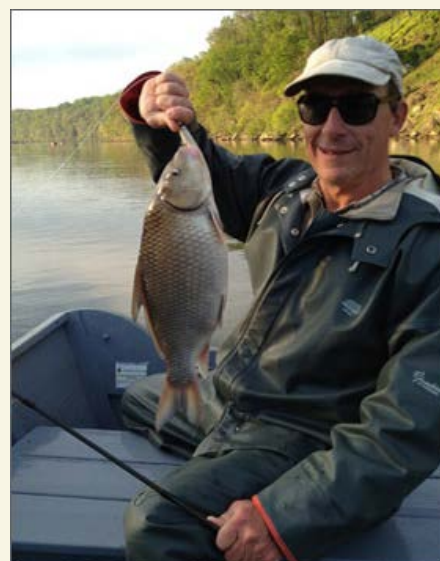


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[Check out Dan's article on Fletcher's Cove in the March 2012 issue of *The Buzz*](#)
(pages 6-7)

[March 2011 issue of *The Buzz*](#)
(pages 11-12)

[Click here](#) for a great interactive map of the area around Fletcher's
(opens in new window)



A surprise fish (carp) for Mike Bailey while striped fishing with bucktails above Fletcher's Cove

net and re-sell herring on the Potomac. One can hope that the Atlantic herring can make a comeback, but there is so much pressure on so many fish species from so many sources, that Mother Earth's resilience seems even more amazing. However, the "tipping point" for many ocean fish species is dangerously close. Man's power to create is unfortunately matched by his power to destroy. It will take balanced sacrifice, money, science, common sense and the will to persevere to save the fish, and us, from ourselves.

Spring break for the area's school districts coincided with excellent fishing this year and I was happy to see many young anglers at Fletcher's. To get the kids away from the enticing glow of the screen is a sweet deal these days. "An apple-a-day will keep the doctor away" is an old saying, as is "you are the apple of my eye." But if you are an angler, remember... an apple doesn't fall far from the tree, so take your kids fishing and away for a break from the screen time. On "Grandparents Day" this year, Grandpa Pete Zaudke took grandsons Pete III and Matthew, of Potomac Maryland, on a very successful shad fishing foray. I really enjoyed seeing their enthusiasm and smiles.

Speaking of youth and fishing, thanks go out to the many who made the 2012 "Family and Youth Casting Call" event so successful. I will single out Brad Gentner for special thanks as he was the overall co-coordinator of the event. On a limited budget, with the help of many volunteers, Brad really made all the pieces fall into place. The rain held off this year just long enough for a dry finish.

With a little luck, the rain now falling will be just the dose of renewal that the river needs to extend excellent Potomac fishing into the early summer. Remember to call Fletcher's for the current status of rental and fishing opportunities. Thanks for reading... see you on the river!

Dan



Our dear friend and customer Catfish Mona with a bucket-mouth bass caught on Fletcher's 'blessed worms' at a secret location (photo by minnow-master)



Grandpa Pete Zaudtke, Pete III and Matthew get ready for a fishing excursion at Fletcher's Cove (photo by Dan Ward)

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