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## ARCHIVED FISHING REPORTS

### Report from Fletcher's Cove, May 4, 2009

Into every Spring, a little rain must fall. As this is written, the Potomac at Fletcher's is at a beautiful, moderate state for boating and fishing. But that could change. In a matter of hours. Or not.

While you had to click on a tab that read, "fishing report" to get to this page, regular readers hopefully notice that the title never *reads* "fishing report." Writing a fishing report is like walking towards a cliff in the dark. Why? Simply because fishing reports can only tell you what *has happened*, but folks often read them as a promise of what is to come. One moment you're on terra-firma, then one step later, there's nothing solid to stand on.



**Double Header of American Shad**

(photo taken by Mike Bailey)



**Ken Andres holding an American Shad**

(photo taken by Mike Bailey)

This past week the perch and shad fishing at Fletcher's Cove was fantastic. Those able to get out on the river were rewarded with a perfect combination of water temperature, river flow and light winds. But the patter of raindrops on the sky windows above, remind me just how fragile that trifecta is. When people call me on the phone and ask, "which day should I come fishing?"... I might just as well refer them to their priest, rabbi, imam or spiritualist.

The best I can do for you in this report is to paint a picture of what Fletcher's is about, season to season, and hope that you pay us a visit. As for timing, that is your part of the deal. The beauty of Fletcher's is that, good fishing or not, there is usually something magical here. You just have to be open to it.

**Now, let's travel back to Easter Sunday.**

Nathan Heater is not very old, but qualifies as an "old-timer" in his approach to fishing for perch. He fishes in the wind, the bitter cold, or even when he is told fishing is slow. Catching the bait he wants is part of his game plan and part of the enjoyment. He knows that if the tough days don't deter him, the reward of the bountiful ones will be that much sweeter. On Easter, Nathan had one of those days fishermen spend the Winter hoping for. He caught white perch. Lots of perch. BIG perch. JUMBO perch. When you look at the photo, remember that Nathan throws back a fish for each one he keeps. That's for next year.

Chris Schneider also had a bonanza perch day, with one fish of almost 14 inches. That's a biggie! There should be one more run of large perch around Fletcher's when the high, muddy



**Nathan Heater with Easter Sunday Perch**  
(photo taken by Paula Smith)

water I'm expecting this week clears. The bright side of the rainfall the watershed is receiving right now is that it is just the right temperature to prolong the spring fishing into summer.

Both American and hickory shad are schooling near Fletcher's Cove at this time. The angling on Friday and Saturday produced mixed catches from below Walker's Point to well above the cove. If your darts made it through the hickories to a level a bit deeper, there were many 'whites' to snatch the lure. Even a few double-header Americans were caught, witness the photo (of same) by Mike Bailey. Ken Andres of the American Sportfishing Association paired with Mike on Saturday and posed with a newly arrived denizen of the deep.

With the generally cool spring we are having, shad fishing may well last into June, with the larger Americans becoming the predominant species as the days slip by. While the murky water to come this first week of May will make angling for shad problematic in the short term, don't snooze too long or you will miss the rebound. We still have plenty of darts to fill your tackle box. Come and get 'em before they're gone.

On April 26th and 27th, Fletcher's Cove and the National Park Service were host to the Jim Range National Casting Call. Family and Kids fishing day on Sunday the 26th was a rousing success with many smiling children lining the C&O Canal with their retro-cane poles and bobbers. Monday saw the "big kids" take to the water for some fishing and schmoozing. There was a precious moment to remember and honor Jim Range, whose presence on this day was sorely missed. And although life-long waterman Louis Harley has sadly departed this world for waters far beyond, members of his family partnered with ICPRB biologist Jim Cummins to set up the cherished shad planking demonstration. Thanks, one and all, to the many folks who made this event so successful.

Those of us who spend our working days along the beautiful and powerful natural force that is the Potomac River, truly grow to love and respect it. To me, it represents life itself, with its many "moods," its flow from tiny stream to powerful tidal river. If thought of as a piece of classical music, the river would have movements light and whimsical, dramatic and thunderous, sad and soulful.

One of those sad, soul-wrenching movements was played this past week when two people drowned in the waters above Fletcher's Cove. It has been so moving to see the families and friends of the victims come to the water's edge. Our words of condolence do little to comfort, but they are heartfelt. The District Police have done everything possible to find the victims, who slipped in from the shore. But the river can be slow to release one who drowns, and the waiting, the uncertainty, the helplessness in the face of despair is difficult.

When one considers the many thousands of people who use the river in a myriad of ways, drownings are very rare. But they do happen, and safety measures to prevent accidents must be emphasized. First and foremost, use good judgment. A strong-flowing, rocky, deep river, like the Potomac around Fletcher's, is unforgiving of any lapse in proper judgment. Wear a life vest when boating! Do not drink alcohol when going on or by the riverside! Keep hydrated on those torrid summer-in-Washington days. Understand how slippery the rocks can be and how close to shore the water becomes deep! People ask me about wading while fishing near Fletcher's. My one word answer: DON'T!

We, the people of Fletcher's, do what we can to foster safe recreation around The Cove. But you, the river user, must take the steps necessary to keep the day safe for yourself and your family. Do not fear the river... it is a precious resource that life is drawn to. But by all means, put safety first, then have your fun.

We hope to see you at Fletcher's.

Dan

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