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## FISHING REPORT

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### Report from Fletcher's Cove, Labor Day, 2009

As summer 2009 passes gracefully into fall, the river glides past Fletcher's Cove this season with a gentle current and a diamond-like sparkle from unusually clear skies. There are still weeks of opportunity for you to come to us and partake of one of Washington's most beautiful and unspoiled natural locations. Fletcher's will likely remain open until early November, with canoe and kayak rentals contingent on water temperature and levels. This "city of trees" is magnificent to behold when nature paints the leaves in their autumn hues.

Honesty is always my policy... truth be told, fishing has been sluggish since the last report. But the cooler temperatures should signal the fish to look more aggressively for a meal here and there. Opportunities will broaden as the water cools through the optimal range of the low 70's to around 50 degrees.

For the die-hards, such as Alex Binsted with a beautiful largemouth bass and Brooks Noble with a heavyweight class catfish, eternal optimism and diligent effort produce trophy size fish under all conditions. Every angler likes to nab a "big one", but as I often preach, fishing is as much about the process as the product. Like many things in life, the journey is enriching, the destination, just its final chapter.

There was a very special birthday party at Fletcher's Cove a couple weeks back. Tate Waugh loves to fish and wanted to share that love with his friends in celebration of a new year of life. So, for his happy day, friends and parents gathered at the boathouse, got rigged-up with some cane poles, got a grip on some wiggly worms, and with a little help from our resident angling expert, Alex, had a great party, with fishing, boat rides (and a cake, of course!). It's always good to see smiling kids away from the electronic overload we all experience these days. Tate has likely just started a life-long love of angling ; it's wonderful to think... that birthday party feeling will hopefully stay with him all his days as a fisherman. Thanks to Tate's Mom for sending us such an appreciative note and photos.

Nathan Heater is my current nominee for "best perch fisherman on the river." (Check out the May, 4th, 2009 report.) Apparently, he has a new hobby in which he also excels . One hot August day, with no jumbo perch closer than the lower tidal Potomac, who shows up at the store but Nathan, with the fruits of that new hobby. Thanks, buddy ; Those tomatoes and peppers were beautiful, and yummy!

The river of life flows also through Fletcher's. At its headwaters, youngsters like Tate, mentioned earlier, start a journey downstream to adventures unseen. Touching many lives, over many years has made being at Fletcher's so amazing. With that thought, I must end this report with some poignantly sad news. Lloyd "Shorty" Draper passed away on August 27th. Shorty was approaching 93 years young. Mr. Draper, as I liked to call him out of respect, was one of a select group of regulars at Fletcher's to whom I refer as "the happy people." These are the people who lift everyone's spirits, just by showing up. We all know people like this. You're having a downer of a day, then you see them with their smiling faces, and suddenly, things are looking up.

Shorty loved all types of fishing, but his first love in angling was for shad. When I was a young teen, my fishing buddy Mark Binsted and I would try to edge-in anywhere Shorty and his Brother "Beans" were anchored. We knew they knew where the shad were. And on top of that, if we were very lucky,



Alex Binsted with an  
August Potomac largemouth

and maybe helped them pack up their gear, we would be the beneficiaries of the greatest hand made, painted and tied shad darts the world has ever known! If you had a few of Mr. Draper's darts, you were well advised to protect them from otherwise honest angling buddies, or else try to figure out where they went!

Mr. Draper fished at Fletcher's for sixty-plus years. Way, way back into Grandpa Joe Fletcher days. And as far as I can tell, EVERYBODY liked him. Never saw him angry, throw a fit, cuss or any such nonsense.

He was a proud veteran of the Navy, having served on the USS George Breeman, DE-104 during World War II. You didn't have to ask him anything about love of country. You could just feel it.

When Shorty's car would pull into the boathouse, I knew just what would happen. He would bound out of the passenger seat with the gate of a much younger man, so happy was he to be at the river again. I would look behind him. Left in his wake was the driver, his loving wife Eleanor, whose nickname, Bounce, coincidentally described the upward effect on she had on your disposition. (I think the "Bounce" really referred to her love of dancing.) Bounce had the patience of a saint while Shorty spent those many hours on the water.



Lloyd "Shorty" Draper  
October 12, 1916 - August 27, 2009

Joe Fletcher, proprietor of the boathouse for decades until his recent retirement, had this to say:

*"I first met Mr. Draper and his brother Beans in the early 1950s when they came each spring for the fishing season. A friendship developed between the Fletcher and the Draper Families. Lloyd and my Dad, Julius Fletcher, fished the Potomac, the Bay, and the Outer Banks together.*

*My Dad told me that other fisherman were amazed when they saw two fellows catching shad on lures. At that time, no one caught shad that way, but Lloyd and Beans designed a lure which they called a shad dart. To this day, Lloyd's darts are prized by shad fisherman.*

*Lloyd was always happy to introduce new fishermen to the art of fishing and to share his home made shad darts. I learned a lot about fishing from him, and I will always remember our shad fishing trips and the good times we had together each fall on the Outer Banks.*

As one long time fisherman said to me when learning of Lloyd's passing, 'He's the last of the great shad fisherman.' So, Lloyd, when I go shad fishing in the spring, I'll set a line out with your darts just for you.

Dear friend and fishing partner, we all love you and miss you; you were truly a giant among men."

To the Draper Family... we too, will dearly miss Shorty. From the extended Fletcher's Cove family, we send our condolences. Mr. Draper touched many hearts down by the river.

Dan



Brooks Noble with a heavy blue catfish caught just below Fletcher's



Tate Waugh, the happy birthday fisher-boy



Nathan Heater's summer bounty

