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## FISHING REPORT

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### September 13, 2013 Report

One day last week when opening the Boathouse, I stood on the dock as the morning sun just began to illuminate the surface of the river and cove. The water was still, yet there were hundreds of bright sparkles where liquid met sky. With a bit of time and on closer scrutiny, I realized what I was seeing. Tightly packed schools of tiny shad and herring were breaking the water's surface, some leaping a whopping inch or two into the air. I thought of it as majesty in miniature, a quiet spectacle of re-birth and nature's bounty. Those little fish, the result of this year's spawn, were starting the long journey back to the ocean from whence their parents came. Most, I knew, would never make it back to Fletcher's Cove. A small fraction will return, hopefully enough to sustain their cycle of life. In that moment I felt a rare sense of peace and confidence in nature.

Sparkling must be inspirational. I watched the sparkling strobe lights come alive at dusk on the Eiffel Tower this summer, inspiring a moment of peace and confidence in humanity.

Fall is a time of reflection at Fletcher's Cove. Time to start thinking and preparing for next year while still serving the customers of today. Many of our college student summer helpers are back on campus so the energy level and mood around The Cove is dialed down a bit. Boat repair is about to begin, and will continue until the cold of winter settles. It's a long and methodical task, yet has to be done. In a world of special little things, our fleet of old-style wooden rowboats stands as one. People spend much of their time nowadays apart from nature. Come to Fletcher's and pull on the oars of one of our well-worn rowboats and I think you might feel a part of, rather than apart from, what is around you. Think of it this way: Levi's 501s or polyester?

While the juvenile fish from the spring spawning runs make their way to the bay and ocean, the resident fish of the Potomac continue to provide serious angling opportunities. Brooks Nolble has been regularly motoring up to our dock with Blue Catfish in excess of 35 pounds, including one that broke 50. On September 6th, Dickie Tehaan nailed a couple of three-pound walleyes using his locally famous homemade bucktail jigs. Alex Binsted, the resident expert, watched a fish chasing bait and made one cast to it... wham-o, a 19 inch Largemouth.

On the morning of the "sparkling fish," Patrick Sutherland had been waiting for me to open for two hours before the actual opening time. I felt bad and gave him a little extra help to get him out on the water. Instead of being "down in the dumps" after the wait he shoved off with a "thank-you" and that positive attitude and optimism that a real angler needs to be successful. After learning that he drove all the way from Baltimore to fish for big cats at Fletcher's, I really, really, hoped he would get his just reward. Well, at about ten a.m. I got a call from Patrick. He had just landed a blue cat that pushed 40 pounds. He was happy, I was happy... just another day of fishin' along the old Potomac!



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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)

[Rowin' on the River at Fletcher's Cove](#)  
article in *KidFriendly DC*  
July 2013

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

### CHAPTER SHAD REPORTS



During the shad run (usually April thru mid-June), our chapter sends out reports of fishing conditions at Fletchers Cove and elsewhere as we receive information. If you know someone who might want to receive these reports, [email NCC-TU](#) with "SHAD" in the subject line and provide your name and email address. If you received shad reports last year, you don't need to resubscribe to get them in 2013.

[Click here](#) for a great interactive map of The Boathouse at Fletcher's Cove Area Fishing and Outdoor Fun (opens in new window)



Patrick Sutherland on Fletcher's Dock with His Reward

People often ask me about snakes around Fletcher's Cove. Are there lots of snakes? Are they poisonous? Will they come after me? Well, with the disclaimer that I am no expert, the answers are pretty straightforward. Yes, there are quite a few snakes inhabiting the Potomac gorge and at least one of the species

is poisonous. That one is the Copperhead and yes, we see them fairly regularly. But Copperheads, like many adaptable species such as deer, fox and raccoons are all over the D.C. area and Fletcher's has no claim to an abundance. If one uses a dose of common sense and caution there is no reason to particularly fear the landscape around The Cove.

A boathouse regular just yesterday told me a story of her close friend who was bitten by a Copperhead in her suburban driveway. Bites by the Copperhead require immediate medical attention but are rarely fatal. In my 44 years on the river I know of only one "bite case" near the cove. Snakes are cold-blooded creatures; they like to curl-up in warm rocky crevices and nest under rotting logs or driftwood jams. Always be careful where you step or when you reach in, around or under a likely hiding spot. Only once in a blue moon will a snake "come after" a human, usually to protect a nest or, like any animal, when it is cornered.

Black Rat snakes are the ones we see most often. Black snakes are not normally aggressive and are not poisonous. Stay clear of them...they will bite (so would you if someone stepped on you!) Black Rat snakes are a good creature to have around as they feast on (as you might guess) rats and other rodents. So we welcome them as long as they stay outside the tackle shack or bike shed. They do pay a visit once in a while, but patience and gentle encouragement with a broom usually wins out. Eastern Garter Snakes are also commonly seen around Fletcher's. They are not poisonous and in fact seem downright friendly. Interestingly, unlike most snakes that lay eggs, Garter Snakes give birth to live young. They are relatively small, beautiful snakes and while it is tempting to some folks to pick them up, it is better to admire with your eyes.

Whether you are coming to Fletcher's to fish, kayak, walk the tow path, bird-watch or just break from routine, we will stay open into late October, weather and water conditions permitting. The fall is a lovely time along the C & O Canal and Crescent Trail: Wildflowers are peaking now and the bird-watching is still in full swing. Nimble little humming birds still visit our lilies, and ospreys are smacking the water for a high protein meal. As more birds and critters migrate through the area, who knows what you might spot along the river bottom and canal.

Thanks for reading this; come visit with us at The Cove.

Dan



Matt Murtha Fishing Midsummer



Dickie Tehaan With a Tasty Walleye



Derek Binsted With a Beauty of a Smallmouth Near Chain Bridge