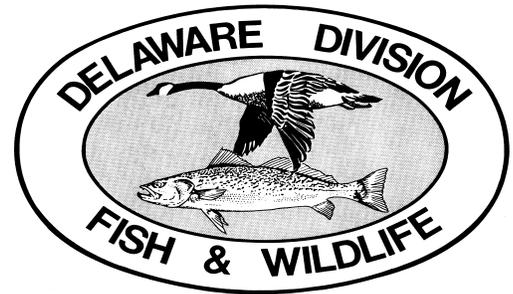


Tournament News



A Busy Summer for Fisheries

Summer 2011

Spring and fall are normally the busiest times for the freshwater fisheries section due to spring pond electrofishing, striped bass monitoring on spawning grounds, and tidal river bass sampling in the fall. However, this year has had some notable fisheries happenings during the hottest months (and they have been hot!).

Below-average rainfall and hot weather have resulted in low water levels in many of our public ponds—Raccoon is a prime example. In some ponds, this low water may impact use of the boat ramp. I had a report from Trap Pond that the ramp was nearly high and dry. You may want to scout out planned tournament sites to be aware of any such problems. The other issue with the hot weather is the possibility of mortality events. Hot weather often leads to algae blooms. This can result in low overnight oxygen levels. Dissolved oxygen spikes during daylight as algae photosynthesize but crashes at night when the plants use oxygen. Any fish already under stress, such as hooking and handling, is more likely to succumb to high water temps and low oxygen. Golden Rule tournaments are a good way to avoid this situation.

Then there was the snakehead caught by an angler on the Marshyhope Creek near Bridge 404. This is the second snakehead caught in Delaware—specifically in the Nanticoke watershed. The Division needs to hear about any snakehead caught in our waters so we can carefully monitor the extent of their distribution. Your eyes on the water are critical in this endeavor. If you catch one here in Delaware, please send a photo [to catherine.martin@state.de.us] or call our Fisheries Office [302-739-9914]. We appreciate your cooperation. And of course, immediately kill the fish (see page 2). You can freeze it or dine on it.

We marked 2,000 largemouth fingerlings and stocked them into the Broadkill. Up to 8,000 unmarked fingerlings will be stocked into the Nanticoke this month.

In late July, Division Enforcement agents, Jeff Howell and John McDerby, observed a dead Atlantic sturgeon floating in the Delaware River just north of Pea Patch Island. They towed the fish back to Delaware City where we retrieved it for examination. The 7 ft, 6 inch fish was a mature female with eggs. Samples of the eggs were collected to determine egg condition; spawning usually occurs during the spring. Tissue samples were taken for contaminant analysis and also for genetic testing. This was an important find for the sturgeon monitoring project according to project leader Matt Fisher. The notice in the Fishing Guide asking for reports of sturgeon carcasses (call 302-735-8663) has resulted in many more reports and carcasses in much better condition than past years. This enables us to collect more useful information from these ancient fishes.

Telephone numbers of Interest

For tournament reports:

- Cathy Martin, 302-735-8658 (New number); catherine.martin@state.de.us
- Jared Jacobini, 302-735-8661 (New number); jared.jacobini@state.de.us
- For tournament permits: Carol Gondeck, 302-739-9913
- New Fish Tag Hotline: 302-653-2887, leave name & phone no.

Fish & Wildlife Enforcement Agents:

New Castle & Kent Counties:

302-739-6139

Sussex County: 302-855-1901

Report Violations: 302-739-4580

Or 1-800-523-3336

24-hour Enforcement Number for Environmental Complaints

1-800-662-8802

Operation Game Theft :

1-800-292-3030

Permit applications:

www.fw.delaware.gov/

Click on Fisheries, Go to Recreational Fishing, at top of page—App. for fishing events; under bass, see Tournament report form or tag return forms.

www.fw.delaware.gov

Catch a Snakehead and Win

The MD Department of Natural Resources, US Fish and Wildlife Service, and Potomac River Fisheries Commission are asking anglers to kill the invasive northern snakehead. The goals of the project are to reduce the number northern snakehead in Potomac River and to document range expansion.

Anglers who catch and kill a northern snakehead should post their catch on MDNR's Angler's log, which is good for one entry into the contest.

There is no limit to the number of entries someone can submit. Prizes are to be given in January.

Top-prizes include (1) \$200 fishing tackle package, (1) Maryland State Park Passport , and (1) Potomac River Fishing license.

To Enter:

1. Catch and kill a snakehead [*hint: cut the isthmus (red arrow) to kill the fish*]
2. Photograph the fish with a ruler or other measuring device to show fish size
3. E-mail the photo with information on where the fish was caught to:

fishingreports@dnr.state.md.us

Editor's Note: This contest is open to Delaware anglers fishing in Delaware's Chesapeake Bay tributaries as well. Please send a photo to: catherine.martin@state.de.us and let us know about your catch too. You can also call the Fisheries Section (302-739-9914) to report a snakehead catch.



A second Delaware snakehead was caught from the Marshyhope Creek near the Rt 404 Bridge in early July 2011. The first fish was collected by Division biologists during electrofishing efforts in Broad Creek in October 2010. Both fish were adults (24 & 26 inches). Division staff will be on the lookout this fall during normal bass monitoring on the Nanticoke River which overlaps possible snakehead habitat.

Snakeheads like submerged weedy areas in the summer during spawning (June to September) but will hold in spatterdock (bull lily) or overhead structure in spring and fall. Remember to cover your livewell if you have one aboard because they are livewell escape artists, jumping out of any opening.

Invasive Species Update

In April, Division staff electrofished the Upper Broad Creek where the snakehead was collected last fall during a cooperative sampling effort with the US FWS. Federal fisheries staff brought their electrofisher to Broad Creek and sampled from the new Laurel boat ramp upstream to the base of Records Pond. Meanwhile Delaware fisheries staff sampled from the boat ramp downstream.



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No snakeheads were found by either crew. However, a second Delaware fish was caught by an angler in the Marshyhope near Woodenhawk in early July (see front page).

Angler Survey 2009

In the last issue, some of the fishing statistics obtained from the 2009 mail survey were discussed. However, there are other types of information that we can get from these questionnaire returns.

We confirmed that freshwater anglers typically practice catch and release; over 90% of warm-water fish caught are released by all angler groups (residents, non-residents, residents over age 65, and 7-day license holders). This was true of both pond and river anglers. What species are most anglers targeting? In the ponds, nearly half of the reporting anglers are after largemouth bass, with fewer targeting sunfish and crappie. River and stream anglers report over half (60%) seeking largemouth bass, 20% after smallmouth bass, with white perch coming in third.

Trout fishing in Delaware is limited to a put-and-take fishery with catchable size fish stocked in the expectation that they will be harvested. Six northern Delaware streams are designated as trout streams. White Clay Creek is the most popular of these. In Kent and Sussex Counties, trout fishing is limited to two ponds, Tidbury and Newton. Although 2009 was the first year that Newton was stocked with trout, anglers reported more days of trout fishing effort there than Tidbury.

One of the questions we always ask is what issues are of concern to our anglers. Water quality and fish advisories usually top the list as they did in 2009. Increased boat and shore fishing access, increased enforcement, control of aquatic weeds, and improved boat ramps were also high on the list of concerns.

The complete report is available on the Division's website if you are interested in reviewing it. Go to the Fish & Wildlife website: www.fw.delaware.gov, click on *Fisheries*, go to the bottom right of that page, and click on *Research and Management*. The report is listed under *Research Reports* as: *Freshwater Angler Survey*.

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On the Web

www.fw.delaware.gov/

Nanticoke American Shad By Mike Stangl

In the late 1800s, abundant populations of American shad filled the tributaries of the Chesapeake Bay. In 1896, more than 216,000 shad were harvested from the Nanticoke River. That harvest was the third largest in the Maryland rivers, surpassed only by the Choptank and Potomac.

Each spring, shad fishermen took to the river in “shad barges,” long flat-bottomed skiffs. They cast cotton gill nets designed to ensnare fish as they tried to swim through them. Since the shad were able to see and avoid the gill nets during the day, most shad fishing occurred at night. The fishermen attached wooden floats with oil lanterns to their nets so that they could find them in the dark.

By the mid-20th century, the harvest of shad had greatly declined due to overfishing, pollution, and the damming of rivers and their tributaries. By 1960, the number of American shad harvested in the Nanticoke had fallen to fewer than 30,000 fish. In 1980, the population of American Shad was so depleted in the Chesapeake Bay tributaries that Maryland closed its shad fishery statewide. In 2000, the remaining fishery located in the upper Nanticoke River in Delaware was closed and has remained closed to this day.

In an effort to restore American shad populations to the Nanticoke, this Division began stocking shad fry in the Delaware portion of the Nan-



Jordy Zimmerman with an American shad collected during spring 2011 survey.

ticoke in 2001, stocking the Maryland portion of the river and Marshyhope Creek. Each spring, adult American shad are collected in Deep Creek and the main stem of the Nanticoke River near Middleford, Delaware then transported to the Nanticoke Shad Hatchery located on the Nanticoke Wildlife Area. The fish are held in large circular tanks at the hatchery until they spawn naturally in the tank. After spawning occurs, the eggs are collected and hatch within the protection of the hatchery, providing them a “jump start” free of predators. Several days after hatching, the shad fry are released into the Nanticoke where they continue to grow on the nursery grounds before migrating to the Chesapeake Bay and the Atlantic Ocean. Approximately 4.5 million fry have been stocked in Delaware’s portion of the Nanticoke since 2000.

As adults, male shad will return to the Nanticoke to spawn in as little as 3 years. Females may mature and return to spawn at four years of age to help replenish the population.

American shad in the mid-Atlantic region survive after spawning. When spawning inside the tank is complete, adult shad are tagged and released back into the Nanticoke River to spawn again the following year. Shad, once an important foodfish along the East Coast remain ecologically important as prey for such species as largemouth bass, striped bass, and white perch.