

The River News

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The Official Newsletter of the Delaware River Fishermen's Association

Vol. 38, No. 2

March-April 2026

March Meeting To Highlight Raffle Drawing And Shad Fishing Seminar

Plases Return All Raffle Tickets, Stubs, And Cash In Time For Drawing At March Meeting!

Our 2026 raffle drawing for a Lunker Bass Guided Trip with Anthony Awgul and also a custom-built fishing rod will take place at the DRFA meeting on Wednesday March 25. After the Grand Prize drawing, additional drawings will take place for discount coupons on other guided fishing trips and fishing tackle available from Anthony's [Awgul Fishing Guide Service](#) and his line of [Menace Baits lures](#).

All tickets, sold-ticket stubs, and cash must be returned to Pete Antoniewicz no later than 7 pm that night, so we can conduct the drawing at the end of the meeting.

If you have not yet sold or purchased any tickets, or if you need more tickets to sell, contact Pete at 609-751-7545 to get any additional tickets before the Wednesday night drawing.

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Gain New Insights On Spring Shad Fishing Just In Time For This Year's Tournament

DRFA members, their friends, and the general public are invited to a Shad Fishing seminar presented by professional shad-fishing guide Rusty Held at the Wednesday, March 25 meeting.

Rusty of Rusty Balls Tackle & Guide Service will both share his fishing experiences and have shad-fishing tackle to sell for the upcoming season.

**NOTE: New Start Time
For 3/28 Tournament!**

*March 28 Bass Tournament
7:30 am at Falls Township
Ramp (Quaker Penn Park).*

Whether you are a novice shad fisherman or a long-time shad angler, this is a good opportunity to pick up some tips and tackle for the season – and just in time for the Club's Shad Tournament on Saturday April 18.

In the meantime, a simple Google search for [Delaware River shad fishing "Rusty Balls"](#) will provide links to Rusty's Facebook page, news coverage, and multiple

Important Dates

Wednesday, March 25, 7 pm. Monthly meeting at Silver Lake Nature Center. Guest speaker Rusty Held will share strategies and tactics for Delaware River shad fishing.

Saturday, March 28, 7:30 am to 1:30 pm. Bass Tournament at Falls Twp. Ramp. (See page 3.)

Saturday, April 18, 2 pm. Shad Tournament weigh-in at Yardley Park and Ride Lot. (See page 3.)

Wednesday April 29, 7 pm. Monthly meeting at Silver Lake Nature Center. Guest speaker TBD.

Sunday, May 17, 6 am to 12 pm. Catfish Tournament at Neshaminy Marina. (See page 3.)

videos of his shad-fishing success.

Minutes Of The January Meeting

The January 28 meeting was called to order by Vice President Scott McDonough.

Scott recapped his experience with the tournament permit process for this year. He was told that there would be a new \$100 fee for each tournament at the Neshaminy Marina – in addition to a one-time administrative fee of \$25 for filing all three permits for the year. Because they could not identify a published rule for those costs, Scott only needed to pay the normal \$25 cost

Scott thanked Frank Beck and Rick Mawson for helping at the Surf Angler Fishing Flea Market. The Club sold \$185 in raffle ticket sales and two membership renewals at that event.

The 50/50 drawing for \$20 was won by John Pedrick.

Minutes Of The February Meeting

Secretary Pete Antoniewicz called the February 25 monthly meeting to order at 7:06 pm with 13 members in attendance. There were no minutes to be read at the meeting.

Treasury Report: John Pedrick reported a balance of \$9,327.73 as of February 20, 2026. The prior year balance for February 2025 was \$6,708.07. The difference was plus \$2,619.66 for this year. A large part of the increase was due to a \$3,569.00 deposit that was rolled over from CDs originally purchased to cover the prize money from the Tagged Catfish Tournament that the Club ran in the early 2000s.

Without that cash infusion, our January balance would have been \$949.34 less than the prior year.

Membership: Membership Secretary Rick Mawson reported that we had collected dues from 14 individuals, four families, and one supporting business member as of the February meeting.

Tournament Report: Scott McDonough reported that he received the permits for the Neshaminy Marina tournaments. He also called for volunteers to serve as weighmasters for the first half of the tournament season. Those volunteers are as follows:

March 28 Bass Tournament: Scott and Casey McDonough

April 18 Shad Tournament: Pete Antoniewicz and Bryan Malkiewicz

May 17 Catfish Tournament: Tom Ferrante and Joe Scannapieco

June 28 Bass Tournament: George and Rich Hoffman

July 17 Catfish Tournament: Gregg Southrey and Chick Bay

Youth Activities: Plans for the 2026 Youth Fishing Derby are still to be determined.

We have not yet heard about a date for the Silver Lake Nature Center Family Fishing Day.

Old Business: Rick Mawson reported on the activity at the Palmyra Fire Company Fishermen's Flea Market. We attracted one new family member and one new supporting business member. We also sold \$60 in

raffle tickets. Thanks to Rick Mawson, Scott McDonough, and Joe Newton for working the booth at that event.

Scott McDonough, Joe Scannapieco, Rick Mawson, and possibly Frank Beck are scheduled to work the March 8th Outdoor Show in Kingwood NJ.

We have not yet heard of any specific work assignments for service hours at Silver Lake Nature Center, but members were reminded that March 7th was the next Saturday for service hours. As always, members are encouraged to register in advance on the SLNC website if possible and to make sure that the DRFA gets credit for any hours worked.

Members discussed options for guest speakers at upcoming meetings. Boat U.S. will be coming in March to speak about their towing coverage before the Shad Seminar.

Fishing Reports: The only fishing reports were ice-fishing reports. Dave Wermuth and Frank Beck were out several times each catching two fish. Pete Antoniewicz advised members to be ready when the water does start to warm up, recounting a good day for smallmouth bass on the Susquehanna River right after the initial warm up in early March.

The 50/50 drawing for \$28 was won by Tim Lang. The meeting adjourned at 8:03 pm.

Angler Of The Year George Hoffman Riffs On Favorite And Least Favorite Tournaments Of The 2025 Season

Anyone who has been a DRFA member for more than a few



years knows that George Hoffman is never far from the top of the leader board in the Angler of the Year race. For many years he was the perennial bridesmaid as he consistently took second place in the annual competition. But since he broke through to the top spot in 2018, it has been virtually feast or famine – a first-place finish or out of the money.

2025 was one of those feast years, as George averaged over 99 points per tournament for his six best qualifying scores. George says that he and his regular fishing partner – his brother Rich – were able to get in lots of practice thanks to good weather through much of the year. That paid off in him being able to figure something out for a particular swift-water tournament out of the Neshaminy Marina Ramp and something that he will remember for future reference under similar conditions.

Yet in some tournaments he simply credits ‘luck’ in being able to produce a winning fish.

When asked what his favorite tournament was, George mentioned two bass tournaments – one where he had caught a good number of quality fish throughout the day and one where he had only two bites that didn’t come until late in the tournament. That was the tournament where he cited ‘luck’ as the deciding factor after he and Rich went virtually all morning without a bite, only to lose a quality smallmouth and then land his tourney-winning largemouth 10 feet away just as time was running out. *(See, it pays to have perseverance right up until the final cast.)* Ironically, on both of those favorite days, George’s most productive bait was a Senko.

Ironically, George cited the catfish tournaments as his most frustrating, events. His reasoning is that he spends so much time recreational fishing for catfish that if he doesn’t immediately have success in catching a large catfish in a tournament it is disappointing to him. “I used to sit for a longer time if I knew it was a good spot,” he notes, “but any more I don’t sit that long – maybe 15 minutes – and if I don’t catch a fish I will move on. If they’re there and they’re

hungry they’re going to bite. If they don’t, then move on and try to find active fish.” Even when his prime spots are not productive, those secondary spots might produce because of the current, or a certain depth, or there’s bait there.

George uses a variety of baits – cut bait, live bait, chicken livers, etc. – but George says that on certain days that the bigger fish will want cut bait or live bait. George has caught flathead

2026 Tournament Schedule

All DRFA Club tournaments are free and open to dues-paying DRFA members, with Club-funded payouts of \$50, \$30, and \$20 awarded to the top three places. Participants also accrue points toward the Angler of the Year competition based on their top six finishes among the nine regular Club events. (There are no tournament entry fees, however, launch ramp and/or parking fees may apply.)

Except for the Shad Tournament, there is also a voluntary \$10.00 lunker pool with a 100% payout to pool participants at tournament’s end for the three heaviest pool fish – 60%, 30%, and 10%.

Except for the Shad Tournament, new members may register on the morning of an event before check-in time. All participants should check in at least 10 minutes before scheduled starting time. Weigh-in is at the time specified. Late entries will not count.

Always check the DRFA website or the Tournament Hotline (267-934-2148) the night before the event to learn about potential rescheduling or relocation due to weather or water conditions.

<u>Day</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Event</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Location</u>
Sat.	3/28	Bass	7:30 am – 1:30 pm	Quaker Penn Park (Falls Twp)
Sat.	4/18	Shad	2 pm weigh-in	Yardley Park And Ride Lot
Sun.	5/17	Catfish	6 am - 12 pm	Neshaminy Marina Ramp
Sun.	6/28	Bass	6 am - 12 pm	Neshaminy Marina Ramp
Sat.	7/18	Catfish	7:30 - 1:30 pm	Gloucester City Ramp
Sun.	7/19	Youth Derby	8 - 12	Pennsylvania Yacht Club
Sun.	8/16	Bass	7:30 - 1:30 pm	Gloucester City Ramp
Sat.	9/12	Catfish	6 am - 12 pm	Neshaminy Marina Ramp
Sat.	10/3	Bass	7 am - 1 pm	Byram Ramp
Sat.	10/24	Bass	7 am - 1 pm	Bulls Island Ramp

catfish but doesn't particularly target them in tournaments.

When asked if he had applied any new techniques or patterns this past year to get back to the top of the hill, he said, "Not really. Just don't get hard-headed and keep throwing the same bait when it's not working." He cited the example of how he loves to throw a spinnerbait but now will back off of it if it's not working.

George admits to spending a fair amount of time on the water outside of tournament days and says he tries to fish at least twice a week and at the same tides as the tournament hours to identify patterns for an upcoming event.

George does target flathead catfish at times during his recreational fishing, typically using live bait like sunfish or perch and targeting hard structure more than the deep holes where he targets channel cats. He doesn't worry about the spines on those fish or take the time to trim them off. In fact, he notes that bullheads are supposedly a target of the flathead catfish.

As far as the 2026 season goes, when asked if he had any new plans for the coming tournament season, George replied, "I'm not going to really try that hard" before admitting, "I say that all the time but once you get fishing, you know..." and finished with a laugh.

A World Of Fishing Tales Eases The Sting Of Cabin Fever For January Meeting Attendees

Attendees at the January 28 monthly meeting were treated to a presentation from outdoor photographer and storyteller Ray

Miller (*aka The Wandering Sportsman*) who addressed his fishing experiences from Canada to Argentina and a new outdoor magazine project he is currently working on.

Believe it or not, Ray is a native of North Philadelphia, who began his outdoor adventures on a small patch of undeveloped land adjacent to the Poquessing Creek. Those early days taught him patience and stealth in his fishing endeavors, even though he didn't appreciate it at the time.

His early years using a spinning rod gave way to an acquired love of fly rod as a result of seeing one a Jimmy Houston Outdoors show. He was fortunate to befriend an experienced flyfishing angler and proceeded to expand his horizons.

But even though he has traveled the world, he still enjoys the experience of sitting around the campfire at the end of the day to swap fishing stories. And that has led to the eventual development of his *Wandering Sportsman* outdoor media offering.

An early job working the fly fishing shows enabled him to expand his personal connections in that world and to travel the Americas in search of bigger and better experiences in Alaska, Belize, the Bahamas, Argentina, etc.

Ray also contrasted the approach of his *Fur, Fin & Fire* journal tone to that of digital media's straightforward 'how-to' formula, in that his writers try to convey those lessons wrapped in stories with depth and meaning, stories that evoke personal memories and create new perspective.

Interspersed throughout his presentation, Ray shared videos of his South American fishing experiences.

Scott McDonough asked if Ray used similar lures to what he might use in Pennsylvania when fishing in faraway places. Ray said a lot of that is transferrable, although the fly fishermen will go to great lengths to tweak their patterns for the local insects. On the other hand, he spoke of how trout in Argentina know to look for terrestrial insects to be blown into the water on the frequent windy days there – a pattern that can just as easily apply locally, for using poppers or woolly buggers under those conditions.

Ray related how rubber legs, marabou tail, rabbit strips – anything that moves – can work anywhere. He also related how his experience on the Upper Delaware River taught him that stealth also catches fish.

One difference he did mention relative to South America was that they often use two-handed casting to combat the wind and to cover the width of the broad rivers there.

Another contrast between North and South America that Ray mentioned was that Atlantic salmon stocks are dropping off up North, but the sea-run brown trout fishing down South still produces good size and good numbers of fish.

Another recommended spot Ray cited was Jurassic Lake (*Lago Strobel*) in Southern Argentina, where rainbow trout were introduced in the 1900s and have grown to 30 lbs.

Learn more about Ray, his fishing experiences, and his new outdoors magazine by exploring [his *Wandering Sportsman* website](#).

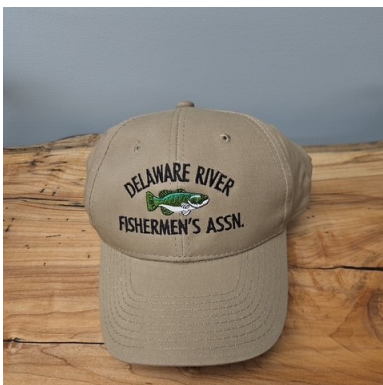
NJ Fishing Digest Now Available Online

Anglers can now access the [New Jersey Freshwater Fishing Digest](#) with current regulations, stocking dates, and informative articles from the NJ Fish and Wildlife website.



Multiple Styles Of DRFA Fishing Caps Still Available

If you need a fresh fishing cap for the upcoming season, we still have multiple styles of them available for sale. See Bryan Malkiewicz at the March meeting.



We have four all-khaki-colored hats with Club name in black embroidery.



This khaki top/hunter-green brim/black-name design still has four hats in stock.



There are still three of these duck-hunter camo designs in stock.



And you can still get one of the two remaining mesh-back hats in

this design featuring a khaki-colored top, a green brim, and the Club name embroidered in red.

From A to Z:

Hope Springs Eternal

Every year, I vow to get out over the Winter holidays if the water temps and air temps tick up toward 40 and to be on the water into January as long as the ramps aren't iced up. And then as days start getting longer and February's cabin fever starts to break along with the ice, I vow to get out to the Susquehanna River Main Stem to intercept the 'big girls' as they start to make their way from their wintering holes toward their spawning grounds.

But in recent years, something always seems to get in the way – family business, volunteer activities, high turbidity from heavy rains and/or snow melt, and lately, more often than not, extremely high winds.

This winter was no exception. And now here I am nearly four months since my last jet-boat outing and on the doorstep of a new tournament fishing season, without having wet a line locally.

But now that I am finishing up writing this newsletter, as my last long-term commitment of the

Get In On The Fun From The Start!

Earn points in the Angler-of-the-Year competition with every tournament weigh-in, starting with our March 28 Bass Tournament. Your six best scores count toward the final standings.

winter season, I am hoping to be able to convince a few fishing buddies to join me out on the water to make up for lost time. And I encourage you to do the same.

Now that air and water temperatures have both cracked the 40-degree mark, don't be intimidated by what looks like less than ideal conditions. Since getting back into serious fishing 30 years ago, I have learned that conditions I might have avoided in my younger years can actually work in my favor if I get out, experiment, and learn from that experience, especially in chasing smallmouth bass on non-tidal rivers (*Delaware and Susqy*). Now that being said, you do need to use common sense in terms of Spring weather or water conditions. That means good raingear, boots, and layered non-cotton clothing to keep you warm and dry in the event of spray being kicked up while running in brisk winds. It means watching the upstream gages to avoid heavy debris dislodged from shorelines at high or rising water levels. It means **always** wearing a non-inflatable PFD when water temps are low. You should also consider fishing with a partner who can help you cope with unexpected events related to launching/retrieving your boat, anchoring in current, or helping you net your catch in fast moving water.

You might also consider ramping up your cold-water boating experiences step by step – for example, trying water 5,000 to 10,000 cfs higher than you've ever boated before, instead of instantly going out in water 20,000 cfs higher than you've ever navigated.

But once you get used to those safety steps to compensate for

cold-water boating you learn how to get comfortable with those conditions and how to improve your angling success in spite of, or more accurately because of, higher Spring conditions.

Here are just a few of the better learning experiences I have had since working my way up to Winter and early Spring fishing:

- **Higher water creates its own hot spots.** When rushing water hits a shoreline protrusion (*or a submerged hump*) it creates eddies where you've never experienced them before. And those calm-water pockets can hold fish despite the water racing past you just a few yards away. Don't forget to probe different areas of these new-found structures, fishing from the edge of the hardest current in toward the slow-moving bubble line and perhaps even to the slack water. Also probe the eddy from the top to the bottom, as I have seen fish sitting anywhere from the inside of current at the top of the 'comma' formed by the shoreline deflection all the way to the bottom of the eddy where the current eventually reaches back to the shoreline again.
- **Water temperature is relative.** Not all 40-degree water fishes the same. Water that has risen three or four degrees in the past few days can trigger feeding activity whether that rise is from 37 to 40 or from 40 to 43. Even steady temperatures of 40 degrees or better can be productive as well. The only thing I don't like is more than a few degrees of falling temps

whether that is falling from 44 to 40 or from 40 to 36.

- **Not all of the water will be equally stained.** I have no problem fishing water with turbidity levels up to 10.0 nephelometric units (NFU) as reported on the [Montague](#), [Frenchtown](#), or [Trenton](#) gages. And I will even go as high as 20 NFU if I know the area and where pockets of clearer, calmer water might be found.
- **The river is not a monolithic structure.** While all the water passing the Water Gap, eventually makes its way down to Easton, Frenchtown, and Lambertville and the turbidity you see upstate will typically make its way south, not all the water in the area by your launch ramp will be equally stained. Clear feeder streams can offer pockets of clearer water in downstream eddies and sometimes in a strip of clear water stretching hundreds of yards long pinched between the ripping muddy current and the shoreline. And if you are lucky, sometimes those feeder streams can provide a bit of warmer water if the local stream levels are clear and shallow on a sunny day while the main river flow coming from the mountains upstream is much colder and muddier.
- **The river is all one level, but not the same degree of current.** When the water in the river is up in the Springtime, it is usually ripping in the middle of the current. But when the water rises three feet or more on the river, the mouth of even the

smallest feeder streams can become deep enough to be magnets for weary fish looking for a calmer, warmer, and less muddy environment.

Those last two examples have proved themselves to me time and time again on various stretches of the Delaware and Susquehanna Rivers. The mouth of the Juniata River feeding into the main stem of the Susquehanna is a classic Springtime fishing hole, with water that is often calmer, clearer, and warmer than the Susqy.

Farther upstream on the North Branch, a fishing partner and I had three days catching scores of fish from each of three tributaries where a high, chocolate-milk river backed up the clearer infeed streams – Towanda Creek, Wyalusing Creek, Tunkhannock Creek, and Bowman’s Creek – and created sufficiently deep, clear, and slow-moving streams capable of holding dozens of hungry bass that just didn’t want to fight the current in the main river.

In the Bulls Island and Lambertville stretch of the Delaware alone, there are several creeks that have produced at just a slightly lower scale under similar conditions – the Alexauken Creek just below the Route 202 toll bridge and the Cuttalossa Creek entering the Bulls Island pool just above the Quarry Building. That last creek is normally a foot or two deep but was nearly six feet deep and only slightly stained when my nephew and I pulled a half dozen keepers out of there when the 44-degree river was muddy and ripping by at 36,000 cfs in mid-March.

A final favorite Springtime tactic that starts to pay off as the water temps rise into the upper 40s is pitching a spinnerbait to shoreline

Check the DRFA website or Tournament Hotline 267-934-2148 for potential changes the day before each DRFA Tournament.

pockets and boulders and

Need new fishing wear for the upcoming season?
Our [official DRFA clothing supplier](#) offers lots of stylish and practical designs to suit your needs. Explore your options today!

Remember, we receive a percentage of every sale so you support the Club while you promote the Club.

especially along sharp shoreline drop-offs, while using my trolling motor to maintain a slow, steady, downstream drift. That pattern has been productive into early May as long as the river current is high and strong enough to push the fish into those protected pockets. Just let your spinnerbait flutter down along the dropoff wall before retrieving it back toward the boat.

So, if you haven’t been fishing since last season, make sure your outboard motor is running smoothly, you have the right clothing and PFD, and you have a good fishing partner and don’t let the less-than-picture-perfect conditions intimidate you. Remember, hope Springs eternal!

Support Our New and Repeat Supporting Business Members

Our supporting business members help us defray the cost of our Club membership benefits – Club-paid tournament prizes, Angler of the Year payouts, website, etc.

Look for new supporting business members to be added in the coming months. And whenever you do business with one of the new or repeat business members be sure to mention our appreciation of their sponsorship.

Classified Ad

Looking to sell two 15 foot Grumman aluminum canoes (circa 1967). These durable, and maintenance-free canoes are in very good condition.

Each canoe will come with two spruce paddles. One can also be used for sailing. A mast and a



boom will be included. Interested parties can contact Pete Antoniewicz @ 609-751-7545.

Length: 15 feet

Width: 35 inches

Depth: 12 inches

Asking Price: \$150 per canoe – if interested in both, aggregate price of \$250.





The Delaware River Fishermen's Association
PO Box 21145, Philadelphia, PA 19154

THE RIVER NEWS is the bimonthly newsletter of the Delaware River Fishermen's Association. The DRFA typically meets the last Wednesday of each month, 7:00 pm, at the Silver Lake Nature Center, 1306 Bath Road, Bristol, PA. All interested sportsmen and women are invited to attend our meetings and join the organization.

Don't Forget These Supporting Members Who Help To Keep Our Club Afloat

Remember our supporting business members who provide added financial support, share their fishing knowledge with our Club members, or support our Club and youth fishing efforts with their facilities or products. When we return that financial support by patronizing their businesses, be sure to make specific mention of our appreciation for them helping to fund our guest speakers and our tournament cash prizes. Without their support we would not be able to provide the same opportunities to our current members or to attract potential new members.

Ed Scannapieco And Sons Plumbing, Inc. • Complete plumbing services • Feasterville, PA, • espinc2428@gmail.com • 215-333-3006

Timothy Lang • Custom-Crafted Fishing Rods and Rod Repairs • achieftim@gmail.com • 609-548-8844

McKeown's Automotive Services • 2525 Street Road, Bensalem, PA 19020 • State Inspection, Emissions • 215-639-4887

The Fegley Law Firm • 301 Oxford Valley Rd, Suite 402A, Yardley, PA • Business, Employment & Personal Injury Law • 215-493-8287

Rusty Balls Tackle & Guide Service • 2440 W Columbia St, Allentown, PA 18104 • [@rustyballsguideservice](https://www.instagram.com/rustyballsguideservice) • 484-239-4723

Fin Seeker Fishing Guide • Angling Adventures for all River Species • 215-262-4811 • finseekerriverguide.com

Pennsylvania Yacht Club • 2189 State Road, Bensalem, PA 19020, 215-245-9883

Silver Lake Nature Center • 1306 Bath Road, Bristol, PA • 235 acres of woods, lakes, marshes & meadows, 4.5 miles of trails

We also recognize our Associate members – the [South Jersey Bass Club Association](#) and [Delaware Riverkeeper Network](#) – who both provide relevant information and additional fishing experiences for DRFA members.

KEY CONTACTS: *Tournament Hotline:* 215-809-4098 • *Email Address:* DRFA_TheRiverNews@hotmail.com
 • *President:* (vacant) • *Vice President/Tournament Director:* Scott McDonough, 215-989-0153 • *Treasurer:* John Pedrick, 215-817-3929 • *Recording Secretary/Newsletter Editor:* Pete Antoniewicz, 609-751-7545 • *Membership Secretary/Webmaster:* Rick Mawson, 215-809-4098 • *Youth Activities Director:* Charles Bay, 609-744-8260 • *Raffle Coordinator:* Pete Antoniewicz, 609-751-7545 • *Trustees:* Dave Wermuth, Harry Wirebach, Frank Beck, Gregg Southrey