



March 2007

# *The Conservationist*

Potomac-Patuxent Chapter

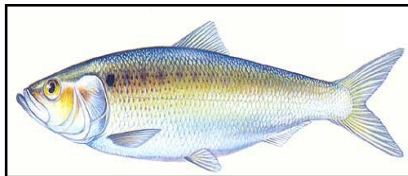
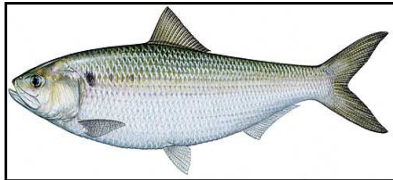
www.pptu.org

## Here a Shad, There a Shad!

By Nick Weber

**Shad** are everywhere, or almost everywhere there are streams running into the Chesapeake Bay. I hope you join us at this month's Chapter meeting to get the lowdown on these fish and the fishing for these worthy game fish, including where they really can be found.

Dale Weinrich will tell the tale about *American and Hickory Shad in Maryland*. And Dale should know. He is Maryland Department of Natural Resources s point guy (short for Program Manager of Fisheries Service) for shad and other fish in the Chesapeake Finfish Program.



The program is responsible for the assessment of 20 tidal finfish species found throughout the Bay and its tidal tributaries. Dale will give us a brief overview of the two shad species – their biology, management actions, stock assessment surveys, and finally locations where you can best fish for these great spring species here in the Chesapeake Bay region. It just doesn't get any better than that!

So come to the meeting to hear and see the A-to-Z on Shad including a couple of great hickory shad fly patterns in our early Tying Bench segment (see back page).

American Shad (top) and Hickory Shad (bottom) are anadromous fish that spend the majority of their life at sea and enter freshwater streams and rivers in the Mid Atlantic to spawn in the Spring. (Artwork courtesy of landbigfish.com).

## Shad on the Fly

Wednesday, March 21st \*

7:00 PM

(see bottom of page for directions)

**\*\*Guest Speaker\*\***

Dale Weinrich  
Maryland DNR

*\*Meeting may be cancelled due to inclement weather. Please check the PPTU listserver or contact a Board Member (pg.2) if there is any question about adverse weather.*

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- Youth Summer Fishing Camp Deadlines Approaching — See Page 5
- Sign Up for Upcoming Chapter Outings — See Page 4
- All About Shad — See Front and Back Cover, and Page 5

### Monthly Chapter Meetings

**Time and Day:** 7:00 PM, Third Wednesday except December, June, July, and August

**Place:** Margaret Schweinhaut Senior Center, 1000 Forest Glen Road, Silver Spring, Maryland

**Directions:** From Capitol Beltway: North on Georgia Avenue (Rte. 97). First right onto Forest Glen Road. Pass Holy Cross Hospital and go across Sligo Creek Parkway. The Center is on the right.

## The Conservationist

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Contributions in the form of clip art, articles, conservation activities, trip reports, letters, fishing and conservation news, tying tips, book reviews, and essays about trout fishing should be sent to the Editor as plain text in the email body or Microsoft Word attachments. Authors should also include their phone number and a brief descriptions of the attachments. The deadline for submissions is the twelfth (12th) day of the month prior to the month of publication

**EDITOR: Matt Baun**  
**Phone: 301-937-8015**  
**mattbaun@yahoo.com**

## PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

By Nick Weber

**W**inter fishing has turned out to be more dreaming and tying than being on the water during the last month. However, this has not stopped us from a lot of planning and outside work. Actually, late winter and early spring are excellent times to do some stream work that requires access to stream banks and visual inspections of various kinds. This time of year also allows ready identification of trash and other debris that is unsightly or impedes stream access. You may want to take this opportunity to work on a section of you favorite stream to make fly fishing more enjoyable during the coming months.

By the time you receive this, our Chapter will have completed its second tree planting on the Hawlings River in upper Montgomery County. This planting is taking place to reinforce the planting in October of 2005 when we planted 200 trees and shrubs. That earlier planting was only partially successful due to a significant flooding incident in June of 2006, followed by inundation by an invasive weed called *mile-a-minute*. Our hope this time is that larger caliper plants and weed control will help the current planting get off to a good start. We are looking forward to other conservation opportunities soon in the Gunpowder watershed in conjunction with our brook trout preservation interests. Watch for our call to go *mile-a-minute* hunting later this year and check out the interesting little river that I and others have found in the Hawlings.

I want to remind you to encourage a youngster to take advantage of a wonderful summer conservation, fly fishing, and camping experience in Virginia or Pennsylvania (see page 5). We also plan to mentor several Johns Hopkins students on the Gunpowder River on Saturday afternoon April 7. If you want to help, please contact Bob Dietz or me (see contact info, left side). Finally, if you wish to donate a 5 wt rod to the chapter to be used as a Boy Scout Camp chapter loaner contact Bob Dietz.

Now, get caught up on your chores because spring fly fishing has begun including the adrenaline rush that spring shad bring. Come out to our information packed March Meeting and get prepared for Shad Fever. I know I am already catching it because I am tying hickory shad patterns for Deer Creek as I write.

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# Tackle and Tactic Tips

BY JAY SHEPPARD

**Last month we discussed a few ways to reduce false casting as an important part of fly casting.** I want to continue this line of thought and add some additional ways to curtail false casting. As with any casting technique, practice is very important. I do not look at each fishing trip with the sole goal of catching trout or some other fish. I also go on local trips to practice my techniques. Anyone who goes on a major fishing trip to some distant, fabled waters is really wasting a lot of their time if they have not been practicing their casting in the weeks immediately preceding the trip.

As indicated last month, false casts can waste valuable daylight and spook the quarry, let alone snag something that is not a fish. Many beginning, and even some more experienced, fly fishers think that the back cast must be in a directly opposite direction than the final forward cast. Although this does help in accuracy of the cast, this is not required. Expert casters can make a forward cast that is almost 90° to the right or left of the optimum forward cast direction; that is, a little over 90° from the direction of the back cast.

With just a little practice everyone should be able to make a forward cast that is 30–45° to the right or left of the opposite direction of the back cast. This has several practical benefits. Sometimes there is no clear area directly behind the fisher in the opposite direction of the intended target. Since the distance is just beyond an effective roll cast, one might find a 'hole' in the trees or brush that is slightly off the desired back cast direction. One can then face sideways so he can see both the back cast 'hole' and the target.

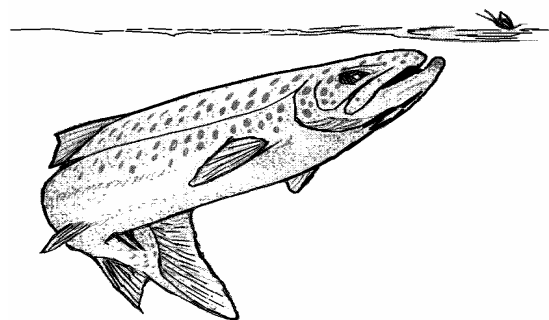
In another situation, the fisher is in the middle of a moderate sized stream and the target is against a far bank. There is only room for a back cast that is directly down (or up) the stream. But even where there is ample room, there is no need to make several false casts in order to line up the back cast with the final forward cast. Daylight is limited and life is short! We catch zero fish when the fly is in the air.

One of the main purposes of a false cast is to extend line out the rod past the tip. Make sure you can do this with both the back cast and a false forward cast. An average trout fisher should be able to extend about 4–6' of line on the back cast and the same amount on the forward cast. With a little more experience this should almost double.

Another trick is to use the surface tension of the water on the line to extend line on the initial pickup. If the rod is kept low and there is almost no slack between the rod tip and the line tip, a smooth, upward snap of the rod can cause some line to be sucked out through the guides. This trick requires the angler to let several feet of line slip through the fingers as the rod starts up and then clamps onto the line as the rod approaches the maximum load point. If done properly, this can get perhaps 3–4 feet of line out before the back cast is made, maybe another 5–7' extended with the back cast and then a similar amount extended on the ensuing forward cast.

Another purpose of a false forward cast is to gauge where the final forward cast might land. One must allow for both distance and wind in the forward cast if the target is a small spot on the water. If the target is near a rising fish, I often pick a spot a few feet to the right or left of the fish so as not to spook it with the first cast that might land on top of it. A false forward cast is made to almost land at the nearby point, or sometimes I might even let it fall to the water and drift several feet to go past the trout.

Maximize the time the fly is on the water and not in the air or lodged on a limb or sleeve. Keep the number of false casts to a bare minimum and spend more time actually fishing. ■



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## Patuxent Report

By Jay Sheppard

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**By the time this issue is mailed, we hope to** have stocked some of the local streams with trout. These trout will be a tad confused as to what to eat and how to attack any lure or fly.

Up until now their food was simply pellets that were slowly sinking. Stocked trout do not know how to carefully discriminate between edible and inedible materials. Bits of barks, twigs, leaves, and even gravel have been found stuffed into their stomachs a few days after being stocked in the stream.

With their eyesight having failed them in locating food, they simply shut down their eating for a week or three until they finally learn what an insect or worm is to their needs. Further, since they never had to chase their food before, they have a hard time pursuing streamers and similar offerings for several weeks after stocking.

Bait fishers never have a problem, since anything that smells is edible for the trout 99% of the time. Thus, by about the middle of March, some of these trout will be tentatively feeding on stoneflies and nymphs and more likely to be caught by the sportsman. Dead drifted nymphs or very slowly moving wooly buggers usually can get some strikes. ■

### PPTU MENTOR PROGRAM BEGINNERS & BEYOND

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Available to members of PPTU current with their dues, Ken Bowyer will conduct one on one stream side fly fishing instruction. Interested members must show commitment by having waders or hipsters, a rod and reel outfit, and leader. Discussions will include equipment, knots, casting, flies, dry fly and nymphing techniques, entomology, reading water, conservation, etc. at nearby streams. Instruction will be tailored to individual needs.

**Contact Ken at 301-627-7154 or e-mail:**  
[kenbowyer@comcast.net](mailto:kenbowyer@comcast.net).

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## Upcoming PPTU Outings

By Dennis Covert

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**N**eed to get out fishing more often? Join PPTU Outings leader and other PPTU members this spring — sign up today!

### March

On March 31st we will gather once again on the Gunpowder at the Masemore parking lot at 10:00 am for the second annual *Gunpowder one fly contest* to see who can claim braggin rights for 2007.

Last year's champ, Ken Bowyer, caught 45 inches of trout on his #14 bead head brassie to clinch the right to brag. I'm hoping for a repeat of last year's weather; it was cool at the start then warmed into a very pleasant afternoon.

There were multiple hatches from midges to hendricksons, with a lot of fish-tales at the end of the day. We plan to fish till 3:00 pm then meet back at Masemore to declare a winner, have snacks, and maybe tell a few new fish stories. Don't miss the fun!

### April

There are two outings planned for the month of April; on the 14<sup>th</sup> we will meet on Deer creek for Hickory shad, and on the 28<sup>th</sup> & 29<sup>th</sup> there is an overnight to Yellow Creek in Pennsylvania.

For additional information and directions sign up at the monthly meeting or call me at 410-740-8337, or email me at [denniscovert@hotmail.com](mailto:denniscovert@hotmail.com).

### **ADDRESS CHANGED? Missing an Issue?**

If you have moved or see any error in your mailing labels (*Trout or Conservationist*), please notify **both** the National TU office and this chapter with **separate** notices. Our mailing list is maintained apart from the National list; we do eventually get the notice of address change from National TU, but it is often a few months before it affects your newsletter and other mailings. Please help us help you. Thank you.

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# Shad 101

By Sebastian O'Kelly

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*Editor's Note: As you can tell from the theme of this month's PPTU meeting, Shad are on the minds of many chapter members. If you have never gone Shad fishing before, you will find the meeting and this article from PPTU member Sebastian O'Kelly very helpful. — Matt Baun, Editor.*

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**Materials Needed:** #4 to #8 regular shank hook (I prefer saltwater hooks), any color 6/0 or stronger thread, yellow and red marabou, chartreuse and pink crystal chenille, pink and chartreuse crystal flash; small brass/Clouser dumbbell eyes.

**Color Combinations:** I like pink/red and chartreuse/yellow combinations. White is also a good color that can be mixed with any of the other colors.

## Directions To Tie.

- 1) Secure hook. Tie in eyes on top of hook close to eye, closer than you would tying a traditional Clouser
- 2) Tie in small clump of marabou at the tail, then trim. Tie in several strands of crystal flash.
- 3) Tie in crystal chenille at tail. Wind thread up to eyes. Wind chenille up to eyes then tie off behind eyes. Whip finish thread there or wind thread back over eyes and tie off in front.
- 4) Voila! A an easy to tie and effective shad pattern now ready to be fished for a fun and underrated species.

## Where to Fish'em

Potomac River (Chain Bridge and Fletcher's Boat-house are good spots). Big run of hickory shad and fair run of American shad.

Susquehanna River – Goods runs of both hickories and Americans.

Deer Creek (off Susquehanna) – Lovely spot to wade and sight fish if clear, almost a trout stream experience.

## How To Fish'em

5 to 7 weights with 2X tippet. Sinking lines in the rivers, sink-tip or floating line with 3X on Deer Creek. Cast directly across or 45 degrees upstream. Seams are good spots. Start stripping (short quick strips),

rod low to water as line sweeps 45 degrees downstream. Prepare for hard strike but also be ready to make strong hook set as shad have tough mouths. Then the fun begins! Hickories typically run 10-16" but can go to 20." Americans average 12-20" but can go to 24-26."

## When To Fish'em

Late March through early/mid May. Peak of the hickory run is around Tax Day. The American shad come in a little later. Cloudier days are better. Moderately colored water fishes best. Big temperature swings (as we often have in April) will throw off the bite. But when it's on, prepare for sore wrists by the end of the day!

## Places to get up-to-date reports

[www.tidalfish.com](http://www.tidalfish.com) (Click on the Fly Fishing section in the Message Boards). ■

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# Youth Fishing Camps

By Paul Vicenzi

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**The Board of PPTU has again earmarked funds** to provide financial assistance to our young participants in either of the two nearby fishing camps. A total of \$1,000 was approved and will be available for reimbursement of youth camp fees.

In the event the chapter has multiple participants, the funds will be distributed on a pro rata basis. Contact Paul Vicenzi at [pvicenzi@starpower.net](mailto:pvicenzi@starpower.net), if the young person is accepted and you wish to seek reimbursement.

High School aged girls and boys are encouraged to apply. But, you'll have to act quickly, the application deadlines are quickly approaching.

**March 15, 2007** is the application deadline for the Rivers Conservation and Fly Fishing Camp located in Boiling Springs, PA. This camp runs June 17-22, 2007 and costs \$275. For more info and application instructions, visit [www.riverscamp.com](http://www.riverscamp.com).

**April 16, 2007** is the application deadline for the TU Conservation & Fishing Camp, in Syria, VA. The TU camp runs June 24-29, 2007 at a cost of \$500. For more info and application instructions, visit [www.tucamp.org](http://www.tucamp.org).

## Annual Supporting Contribution

The Annual Supporting Contribution (ASC) is separate from TU dues. Members of the **Potomac-Patuxent Chapter** of Trout Unlimited who make an ASC of \$15 each year will receive *The Conservationist* for one year, and be entitled to other PPTU benefits such as the mentor program, outings, and reduced rates for the Fly Tying class. First-year TU/PPTU members for whom the Chapter receives a TU rebate do not have to pay the ASC, but they are still eligible for ASC benefits. High School and college students are also eligible for ASC benefits. Members of other TU chapters may also make an ASC to PPTU and receive *The Conservationist* and ASC benefits. When you pay the ASC, please indicate whether you wish to receive this publication by mail or email, and be sure to provide your contact information. Your expiration for *The Conservationist* — as well as expiration for your ASC benefits) — is indicated on the address label as “PP-0907” (September 2007) or a later date. Send payment to the address listed below. If you have questions about the ASC or to check on your eligibility for ASC benefits, please contact the PPTU President (Contact info on Page 2) or visit the Chapter’s website at [www.pptu.org/join.shtml](http://www.pptu.org/join.shtml).

## TYING BENCH & ANGLER’S CORNER

You will want to check out this month’s regular monthly features “Tying Bench” and “Angler’s Corner during the chapter meeting on **March 21**. These sessions occur concurrently beginning at 7 p.m. (See Front Cover for location and directions).

**Tying Bench** – This month’s meeting will be Shad from beginning to end, and the Tying Bench is no exception. **Nick Weber** will feature two must have Marabou streamer patterns from Wayne Blottenberger, a daily Shad fisher on Deer Creek. These two simple patterns are so easy to tie that Nick, a novice tier, will show you how. In addition, he will have bags with tying materials and instructions to tie your own in time to go to Deer Creek. Come early to this segment to get a great start on Spring Shad.

**Angler’s Corner**- Come chat with **Dennis Covert** on upcoming outings to the Gunpowder River and the one fly contest, Deer Creek’s Hickory Shad and one of Pennsylvania’s secret streams – Yellow Creek. Of course there is always the fabled Western Maryland Memorial Day weekend trip to discuss, if the others don’t blow you away with a serious case of fly fishing anxiety.



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