



The Buzz

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Volume 25, Issue 4

April 25, 2012

Steve Chaconas is Back

Upcoming Items

PRSC Meeting
TBD
May 28, 2012

PRSC Picture Raffle
Drawing April, 2012

Potomac Riverkeeper
April and June, 2012

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Our April speaker is [Captain Steve Chaconas](#). Steve spoke to the club in October of last year with John Odenkirk about snakehead fishing on the Potomac. This time Steve will be talking about bass fishing in the lower and tidal Potomac, imparting some of the knowledge he has acquired in 25 years of experience operating his bass fishing guide service on the Potomac River. Steve has been featured locally and nationally in TV, radio, and print. In the broadcast industry, he was the Fox Sunday News "Power Player of the Week" for two years! He is a recognized expert source on the Potomac River and is featured on WTOP radio and many DC TV stations. With his combination of fishing and media credentials, Steve is sure to be an engaging and informative speaker.

Capt. Steve is also an outdoors writer with columns in [BoatUS](#), [Angler Magazine](#), [Sportsman's Magazine](#), [Woods & Waters](#), and [The Old Town Crier](#), among others. He has written for the Free Lance Star newspaper, The Mount Vernon Gazette, The Mount Vernon Voice, The American Sportfishing Association, and many others. Steve also hosted the [National Bass Fishing Radio Show](#). In addition, "Capt. Steve" is featured as the BoatUS.com and monkeysee.com fishing expert. His reports and commentaries appear on-line at Comcastsports.com, bassfan.com, wfls.com, potomacbass.com, bassnedge.com, ultimatebassin.com, and others. In addition, he has covered fishing events for radio and TV.

A U.S. Coast Guard Captain, licensed by the Potomac River Fisheries Commission and the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, Steve has been featured in local and national publications: BASSMATTERS, BASS TIMES, BASSIN' Magazine, Boat US Magazine, The Washington Post, The Washington Times, The Los Angeles Times, National Geographic, ESPN, and others. He's been emcee of the St. Jude Children's Hospital Tournament the past 15 years, a member of Boat U. S. Speakers Bureau and the Southeastern Outdoor Press Association and American Sportfishing Association. Steve has been awarded an Excellence in Craft award from SEOPA and was the recipient of the Mount Vernon-Lee Chamber of Commerce 2002 and 2003 Home-Based Business of the Year Award. Earlier this year, he was honored by the Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin with a Potomac Conservation Award.

Prior to fishing, Steve's careers included teaching high school algebra and sales of cars, computers, and surgical products. He also hosted the longest running all-financial morning radio show in the country in Washington, D.C. and is considered to be "The Father of Business Radio."

Check out his Website at www.nationalbass.com.

Steve with an enormous Lower Potomac Largemouth.



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Upcoming Items

Potomac River Smallmouth Club

Wednesday, May 30, 2012

Our next meeting will be Wednesday, May 28, 2012, at the Vienna Firehouse in Vienna, VA.

PRSC Picture Raffle - Mark Susinno Print

As a fund raiser, PRSC is raffling off a Mark Susinno print. It was donated to the club by Garnet Kauffman. It is signed by the artist, and numbered 112/400. Tickets are \$4 per ticket, and 3 tickets for \$10. We will be selling tickets until we have the drawing at the April PRSC meeting. We will have the print at the April meeting. Here is a photo of the print.



Potomac and Shenandoah Riverkeepers

SPLASH. April 28, 2012. The Potomac Riverkeeper will be hosting the final event of the SPLASH series. The Waterkeeper Alliance SPLASH Event Series is a program that engages local citizens and clean-water enthusiasts in water-based activities like swimming, paddling or boating. For more information go to www.potomacriverkeeper.org/SPLASH.

Potomac Riverkeeper Gala. June 10th, House of Sweden, Washington, DC. Our annual gathering of friends and supporters set in the spectacular House of Sweden overlooking the Potomac is our major fundraising event of the year. Planning begins now to ensure success in June.

Potomac Conservancy

River Center Opening Day Celebration. Saturday, May 5, 2012, 7:45am - 12:30pm. River Center at Lock 8. Come celebrate the opening of the Conservancy's eighth season at the River Center with a full morning of events.

Canal Stewards at the River Center. Sunday, May 13, 2012, 9am - 11am. River Center at Lock 8. They will be meeting at the River Center to clean up the lock house area and the nearby towpath. This cleanup is open to all ages, and they will provide all the necessary supplies - just wear clothes that can get dirty.

For more information on the Potomac Conservancy and their events, go to their website at www.potomac.org.

Another Kind of Bass

By Bob Forbes

In early March, we took a family trip to the Hawaiian island of Kauai, the northernmost and geologically oldest of the four major “tourist” islands of our 50th state. This so-called “garden island” has 165 freshwater reservoirs and 9 rivers. Most of the reservoirs were used to irrigate sugar cane, which is no longer grown here. The reservoirs have Smallmouth Bass, Largemouth Bass, and Peacock Bass in them. Peacock Bass were introduced to the Hawaiian Islands in 1957 and have thrived there ever since.

This fish originates from the Amazon region of South America. Fifteen species are known to exist. The “Butterfly” species is found on Kauai and grows to more than 10 pounds on this island. This species is an excellent fighting fish and attacks artificial bass lures with savage strikes. Peacock bass are vividly colored and said to be very good eating.

My guided trip on the Waita Reservoir on Kauai’s south side took place after some rainy weather, so the water reached well into some very good fishing areas. Weed growth in these places required topwater lures, and buzzbaits were the favorite attraction. I caught and released quite a few nice sized Largemouth Bass and two Peacock bass. The Peacock bass definitely outfought the green fish and lived up to their reputation for aggressiveness.

If you are so fortunate as to travel to the Hawaiian Islands, be sure to try some freshwater fishing for Butterfly Peacock bass. The best time is late March through September, but any time can be fun in Hawaii. Many saltwater species are available if the freshwater fishing is slow.



Bob Forbes with a very nice Peacock Bass

Humpback whale watching is in season during the winter months. The whales travel from Alaska and arctic waters to procreate and cavort around the islands. It’s quite exciting to see a 50-foot long whale jump out of the water when you’re nearby in a boat. Typically, a large female Humpback is followed by two or more smaller males. However, when the big moment arrives and the female is ready to mate, a big bull male usually gets the prize. Sorry, small male whales, if you’re lucky, you may be big someday and have your chance too!

Shenandoah Riverkeeper (C)

Citizens, Fishermen, Paddlers and Landowners

Are you tired of the algae in the Shenandoah River? I know I am, and I need your help doing something about it.

Background: Every year I hear endless citizen complaints about murky green Shenandoah River water, snot-grass or filamentous algae covering the bottom and smothering native grasses in the river, floating algae clumps that smell, etc. I'm told the algae ruin people's time, and diminish their use and enjoyment of the river whether they're fishing, swimming, wading, paddling or just picnicing and walking their dogs. These algae blooms are caused by polluted run-off and I am trying to get Virginia to:

- a) Recognize that the river has this problem
- b) Add it to their 303D/305B list of "impaired" or unhealthy waters
- c) Develop a plan to solve it, and then solve it.

Please write a complaint letter including the seven pieces of information below and mail it to me by April 15th.

Please follow each number and relay all experiences you have had with these algae by April 15th. The details of your experience (when, where specifically and how often or critical) and include the following:

- 1) Describe when and how often you use the river and describe what you do (fish, swim, walk dog etc)
- 2) **Describe very specifically what algae problems you've observed where, when, how often and what the impact this has had on your use and/or enjoyment of the river.** I cannot emphasize this enough, please be as specific as possible about specific dates or months of the year, exactly where you were etc.
- 3) Tell me if the algae makes you less likely to use the Shenandoah River for recreation
- 4) Tell the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (VA DEQ) if the algae has diminished your use or your enjoyment of the river. Please use the words "has diminished my use" and/or "has diminished my enjoyment" if in fact the algae has impacted your enjoyment or use of the river.
- 5) Tell me anything else about the algae (ie. dog got sick after ingesting, made your picnic smell etc)
- 6) Request that VA DEQ include the North Fork, South Fork and/or Main Stem on its impaired waters 303D/305B list
- 7) You must include your name and address (other contact information could be helpful too)

Email or mail your letter TO ME by April 15th here:

Jeff Kelble – Shenandoah Riverkeeper

P.O. Box 405

Boyce, VA 22620

jeff@shenandoahriverkeeper.org

Address the top of your letter to:

John M. Kennedy
DEQ Office of Water Monitoring and Assessment
P.O. Box 1105
Richmond, Virginia 23218-1105

RE: Draft 2012 305(b)/303(d) Water Quality Assessment Integrated Report

Thank you all and please email or call if I can help,

Jeff Kelble

Phone: 540-533-6465

Shenandoah Riverkeeper

Email: jeff@shenandoahriverkeeper.org

Jeff Kelble) Needs Our Help

SAMPLE LETTER

March 27, 2012

John M. Kennedy
DEQ Office of Water Monitoring and Assessment
P.O. Box 1105
Richmond, Virginia 23218-1105

RE: Draft 2012 305(b)/303(d) Water Quality Assessment Integrated Report

Dear Mr. Kennedy,

I am writing to request that Virginia's Department of Environmental Quality add the North Fork, South Fork and Main Stem of the Shenandoah as impaired waters on the 2012 305(b)/303(d) Water Quality Assessment Integrated Report because of the severe algae problems the river experiences every year.

I fish the North Fork, South Fork and Main Stem of the Shenandoah extensively and I also use all three rivers to take my family canoeing and camping. However, for much of the year, large sections of each river seem to experience a series of noxious algae blooms that seriously diminish my use and enjoyment of the rivers.

In each of the past six years during late winter a planktonic algae bloom, usually after a high water event, but not always. Over the course of the year I use the entire river system and have seen this on all three rivers from Port Republic down to Front Royal, from Broadway to Front Royal and from Front Royal to the Confluence with the Potomac River. This bloom turns the river a dark murky green color, like green paint, from late winter until about July. When the algae blooms I often choose not to swim or fish and I don't like to take my family swimming because they don't like the off-color murky water. When I do fish I find the fishing is poor and I don't enjoy the experience as much. Whenever the river is this murky color, it's disturbing to fish and the fish are usually lethargic and often they don't feed at all. Activity in the river drops to near zero. For the past two years I simply could not fish the lower south fork or the entire Main Stem from July through August because of the plankton green water.

By mid May or June each year as the river clears the planktons seem to die back. But then a filamentous algae (rock snot) takes hold covers the river bottom and the native grasses which are trying to emerge. The native grasses turn brown and lose their leaves and remain bare the rest of the year. Additionally, a floating bubbly type of algae (I'm told it's Cynabacteria or Blue Green Algae) comes at this time. Clumps rise up to and float on the water surface and then accumulate on anything sticking out of the river and in back eddies. This algae smells like sewage or rotting broccoli. When these algae are blooming I literally do not want to be anywhere near the river and I often choose to go somewhere else. When I have no other place to go then it just takes all the enjoyment out of my day. The fishing is frustrating because you cannot fish without fouling your line on the algae, the fish won't bite lures or bait with algae sticking to it. I find being around the river very unpleasant due to the odors and annoyance. I found this problem in the following areas last year from July through August; Broadway, Lupton, Deer Rapids, Edinburg, Woodstock, Strasburg, Front Royal, Goods Mill, Luray Dam, 211, Alma, Port Republic, Warren Dam, Shenandoah, Route 50, Route 7 among other places.

Finally, in the fall each year the native grasses die back and a bright green filamentous algae again covers the entire bottom of the river from Broadway to Strasburg. All three of these algae make it nearly impossible to fish and again diminishes and sometimes eliminates my ability to enjoy the river.

This cycle of algae diminishes both my use and my enjoyment of the Shenandoah River system. As a result I would like to ask that DEQ include the three sections of the Shenandoah River on 305B/303D list, determine why we are having these algae problems, and to develop and implement a plan to make them go away.

Thank you for considering my comments,

Mr. Tired of Algae

102 East Main Street

Boyce, VA 22620

Email: Reallyreallytiredofalgae@itstinks.com

Phone: 555-555-1234

2012 Upper Potomac River

By John Mullican
Western Region, District II Manager
Maryland Department of Natural Resources, Fisheries Service

Fishermen targeting the feisty and tenacious smallmouth bass are expected to find very good fishing throughout the upper Potomac River in 2012. Above average recruitment and good growth has resulted in unprecedented numbers of smallmouth over twelve inches.

Smallmouth bass recruitment has been monitored by Maryland's Inland Fisheries Division since 1975. The annual survey is conducted at sites throughout the river during July using a 30' seine nets to collect young bass as well as nongame fish species. The relative abundance of young bass each year is measured by the average number of young bass collected per seine haul. Determining the relative abundance of young bass each year enables us to see the fluctuations in reproduction over time and predict how those changes will impact the adult population. Long-term, there has been no significant change in smallmouth bass reproduction since the survey's inception.



Potomac River Seining—2012



Young Potomac River Smallmouth Bass

There are many factors that can influence how many young bass are produced each year. River conditions, primarily flow, generally having the most influence. Spring floods result in weaker yearclasses; the strongest yearclasses are produced during springs when the river has relatively stable, average flows.

As a result, yearclass strength can be highly variable from one year to the next. The abundance of young smallmouth was above the long-term median value 2005 through 2007 with the 2007 yearclass being the largest recorded during the 36 years that the survey has been conducted.

2011 Potomac Survey Smallmouth



ver Smallmouth Forecast

However, the relative abundance of young smallmouth recorded in 2008 – 2010 was below the long-term median.

It is the 5 to 7 year old bass that were produced from 2005 through 2007 that fishermen will be enjoying in 2012. These fish will generally range from 13 to 15" this spring; Bass will be slightly larger in the lower river stretches where growth is a bit faster and slightly smaller in the western stretches where growth is slower.

A specialized electrofishing boat equipped with an outboard jet is used to monitor the adult smallmouth population. Electricity is used to temporarily stun the fish so that they can be collected. Once collected, they are held in an aerated livewell until they are measured, weighed, and subsequently released. Multiple samples are taken at thirteen established sites throughout the river every October to obtain information on the relative abundance, size distribution, and physical condition of smallmouth bass.



Both pictures are of the specialized boat used for electrofishing on the Pottomac River as part of the smallmouth bass survey efforts.

The relative abundance of smallmouth bass collected by electrofishing is expressed as the number of bass collected per hour of sampling. In 2011, the catch rates for smallmouth $\geq 11"$ and $\geq 14"$ were twice as high as the catch rates recorded from 2006 through 2010. Additionally, there was no difference in the electrofishing catch rates between the upper (PawPaw, Little Orleans, Hancock, McCoys Ferry), middle (Williamsport, Taylors Landing, Shepherdstown, Dargan) and lower (Brunswick, Point of Rocks, Whites Ferry, Edwards Ferry) river segments. Eighteen percent of the smallmouth bass collected last fall

that were at least 7" in length also exceeded 14" and 3% exceeded 17". Physical condition indices have

2012 Potomac River Smallmouth Forecast cont'd

remained relatively unchanged.

The largest Potomac River smallmouth ever collected during an electrofishing survey was collected during 2011. The giant bass measured 22 inches in length and weighed nearly 6 pounds! She was gently released back into the western stretch of the Potomac that she has called home for many, many years. Wow, what a fish!

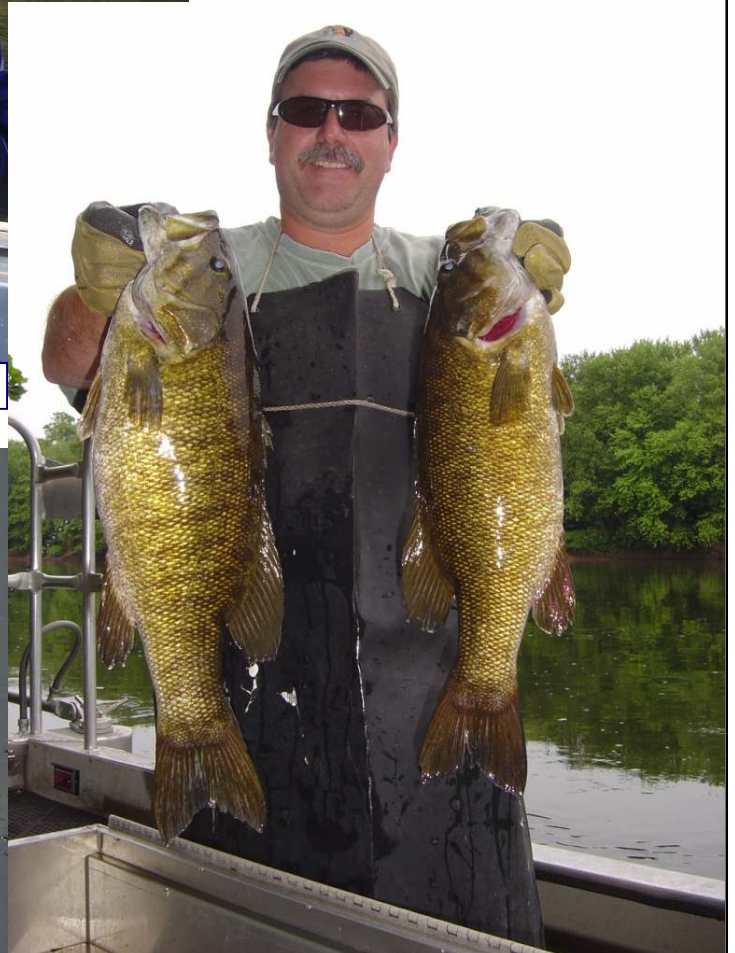


Mark Tom measuring a Potomac River Smallmouth Bass.



Very nice Upper Potomac Smallmouth caught during survey on June 7, 2011

Like many of you, I plan to spend much of my free time this year smallmouth fishing on the Potomac. Please enjoy and respect this great resource and if you have any questions or comments you can always reach me at jmullican@dnr.state.md.us or 301-898-5443.



Two Upper Potomac beauties, including a 22" monster. Caught during electrofish survey on June 7, 2011.

Shad Fishing Report

By Jamie Gold

So far this Spring the shad fishing at Fletcher's Cove has been really good...in fact the best I've had in several years. With the unseasonably warm weather this Spring, the shad came into the Potomac about 2 weeks earlier than usual, and the fishing got good early. Fortunately (for the shad fishing), the rains have held off meaning that the good fishing has lasted since the fish came in. For the last 2 years, early fishing success was blown away by heavy rains and the resulting high muddy water.

My shad fishing this Spring has been restricted to fishing during the week after work. Therefore, I've only been fishing from shore using spinning gear. I usually like to use a fly rod as well, but have found that's better to do from a boat, which requires either getting out earlier in the day or on the weekend.

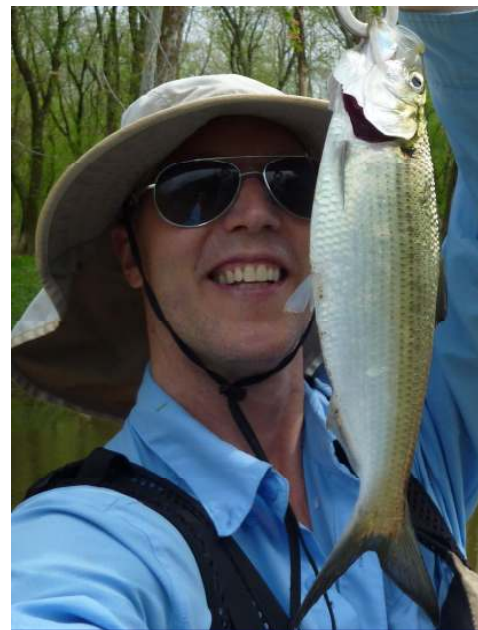


Jamie Gold with a Potomac River Shad.

What's been especially interesting to me is how the fishing has changed with the weather changes over the past few weeks. At first, when it was quite warm, the fishing was sporadic, and the fight of the

fish was average. Then the temperatures dropped, more fish came into the river, and the fish fought really hard. It seemed as if the drop in temperature really ticked them off. Then the weather warmed up again and the fishing got terrific. I had one night by myself where I got a bump every cast, a fish every 3 to 4 casts, and caught 30 fish in an hour. Then I went out one night with fellow PRSC member Chris Schaupp. At first the fishing was slow, then the sun went behind the trees and the fish really turned on. This time we were catching fish every cast or two casts. We didn't even bother trying to count the fish we caught. From the reports I've seen and the fishermen I've spoken with many have had a similar experience at least once this Spring. So far all my fish have been Hickory shad, but I'm still hoping to catch a few American shad before the season is over.

My best success has come on a lure called the Shad Killer. The go-to colors have been pink, chartreuse, and a pink and chartreuse combination. I've been throwing a single lure tied on below a 1/4oz weight. However, others have had success with shad darts, and with using two lures at the same time. The retrieval technique has depended on the conditions and the fish. Sometimes a slow steady retrieve on a deep running lure has worked. At other times they wanted a hard twitch of the Shad Killer. At other times the fish have wanted a fast retrieve near the top of the water (in low light conditions), sometimes while twitching it and sometimes just reeling it in. I suspect that the peak has passed, but it's still worth getting out to fish for them.



Chris Schaupp with his first shad of the season.

Get on Top

By Randy Chandler

If you like to catch big smallmouth bass and like the excitement of your heart skipping a beat then go topwater! There is nothing more exciting than catching smallmouth bass on top. You get the benefit of the visual response from the bass. Even when they miss your bait, it is extremely exciting. When a bass hits and misses a spinnerbait or soft plastic, it's not that exciting, but your eyes will bug out when you see a fat smallmouth explode on your topwater bait.

Topwater smallmouth bass fishing is definitely my favorite way to fish. I have been keeping a fishing log for many years. In the past 10 years, all of the 20-inch or better smallmouth bass I have caught have been on topwater except for one. And the number of sassy smallmouth in the 18" & 19" range that I have caught on top is huge. The weather is getting warmer and the smallmouth are getting more aggressive and willing to chase baits, so get out your topwater baits and sharpen those hooks.

I am not going to talk about all types of topwater baits and Lord knows there are plenty of them on the market. I am going to concentrate on my favorites, ones that have worked very well for me over the years. My personal favorites are: prop baits like the torpedo, a pop'r, a buzzbait, and a walk the dog bait.

I have tremendous confidence in topwater baits and I tend to fish them very aggressively. Let me give you a quick overview on how I fish these baits.

Torpedo by Heddon – I prefer the larger version and I usually fish it very aggressively. Now, there are times when the fish will tell you to fish it otherwise. In that case, slow it down with plenty of pauses, letting it sit until the fish cannot take it any more. I modify the bait by adding a split ring on the nose of the bait and on each of the hook holders. I also cut off the factory hooks and replace them with sharp Gamakatsu hooks. I like to adjust the prop in the back so that it spins freely and makes a nice gurgling sound.

Pop'r – I like both the Yo-Zuri Popper and the Xcalibur Zell Pop. These are great baits right out of the box, but I do add a split ring on the nose of the bait. I believe this gives the bait more action and reduces fish throwing the bait. Again, I fish this bait aggressively, but there are times when the bass want it slow with plenty of time between twitches.



Randy with a great smallmouth he caught on topwater.

Get on Top cont'd

Buzzbaits – What a tremendous bait! This bait really covers a vast amount of water and draws out the big boys. Great to bounce off wood, rocks, over ledges, and around grass. This bait performs extremely well early and late in the day. But, do not forget to give this bait a work out on overcast and rainy days. Over the past several years I have become a believer in using a trailer hook. My experience is that at least 50 percent of the bass I catch are caught on the trailer hook, which makes me think that I would have missed those fish if I did not have that trailer hook on. Bass tend to swipe at buzzbaits so be prepared to follow up with a soft plastic bait like a Case Magic Stik or a fluke.

Walk The Dog Baits – There are scads of these baits, but I prefer the Owner Cultiva Zip'n Ziggy. I just like the size and action on this bait and I have been rewarded with some huge largemouth and smallmouth bass. This bait comes with quality hooks, but again I like to add a split ring on the nose of this lure, which I feel allows me to impart a good side-to-side action (walk the dog) on this lure.



A collection of topwater baits that Randy likes to use.

Okay, now the “when, where and how” on topwater baits. Use topwater especially at dawn, dusk, overcast days, rainy days, and on days when you see smallmouth chasing minnows or sucking insects off the surface. The first rule of fishing is to be observant of the river and your surroundings. Concerning the where: anywhere you think big smallmouth might be holding and willing to kill any bait that comes through its territory, es-

pecially ledges, rock, wood, and grass. The “how” portion is not difficult, but does require some practice particularly with walk the dog baits. The walk the dog technique requires that you keep the rod tip down, pull with the rod then quickly throw the rod tip back which gives slack to the line that allows the baits to swing back and forth. Practice this one. With other topwater baits I generally keep my rod tip high. Do not be too quick to react to a strike – let the fish take the bait, then set the hook. Use monofilament line as it floats and thus will keep your bait on top.

I like to practice with all my baits, especially topwater baits on a local pond. That way I can experiment with the various baits and I can fine-tune my skills. I recommend that you do the same.

Warmer weather is coming and the bass are going to be aggressive so make sure you have one or more topwater baits tied on. To me, there is no better way to fish than using topwater baits. Stick with them, be patient, be confident and I believe you will be rewarded with some of the bigger smallmouth of the year by going on top.

Good luck and good fishing.

PRSC On the Water

By: Jamie Gold

Members of PRSC have been busy this past month catching and photographing some awesome fish. Enjoy, and feel free to submit pictures of fish that you've caught for next month's Buzz.

20 1/4" New River Smallmouth Bass.



Bob Ward - March 2012.

18" Upper Potomac River Smallmouth.



Randy Chandler.

Nice Potomac River Shad.



Max Schaupp, photo by Chris Schaupp (Dad).

Great Winter Chesapeake Bay Stripped Bass.



Galen Halleck. Photo by Jason Halleck.

19 lbs. Golden Dorado.



Martin Hayden in Argentina.

Very nice river smallmouth.



George Thurston.

Another great pig bronzeback.



George Thurston.

Putting in at the Rte. 340 Bridge on the Potomac.



Steve Kimm, Dave Lockard, John and Quinn Lipetz.

Another nice Potomac River Smallmouth.



Randy Chandler. Photo by Jamie Gold.

One More.



George Thurston.

Two Days in the Valley

Article and Photos By Herschel Finch

Actually all I'm going to talk about here is **one** day but it was a pretty good one. If you're a stickler for proper chronology then you need to read this week's Conservation Corner first, because that took place on Monday. However if you don't care, then stick around while I unwind a little yarn about Tuesday, both of which were spent with Bruce Ingram and Jeff Kelble both around and IN the Shenandoah River and Valley. Jeff doesn't get to fish all that often, despite what some people I've met who **think** that's his main activity as Riverkeeper. A lot of Jeff's time is spent reading discharge and development permits, legal position papers and talking to lawyers. Don't get me started on a HS teacher and the demands on THEIR time... (Has anyone

seen Peter Pfotenbauer lately? I rest my case.) So when Jeff and Bruce get an opportunity to fish and I get to be included, well, let's just say it's worth burning a couple of vacation days to be a part of the festivities.

We spent the first day doing a little research with Bruce and getting some photos but the second day was all about our favorite pastime. Bruce didn't have a lot of time to spend fishing so we had to get an early start to get Bruce off the water and on the road for more research below Roanoke. So we met at 6:30 am at the Lackawanna B &



B in Riverton, Virginia, right between the bridges as you come into the north end of Front Royal. Seemed like an ungodly hour to me too but I agreed to it. The nice part about it was that it put us on the south fork just as the mist was rising up off the river. There is nothing either more spell-binding, or as photogenic for a guy, like Bruce, who's a writer/photographer, than that. Bruce burned through 2 dozen shots before we had Jeff's raft in the water. Who could blame him, it was absolutely magical.



Two Days in the Valley cont'd



However, in the water is where we finally ended up, me in the back, Bruce up front and Jeff on the oars. We kinda blew thru the first ¼ mile, tossing jerk and spinner baits here and there for the most part. Nothing was being thrown with any purpose, we were mostly just getting warmed up. Jeff stuck to his tubes and finally broke out a black J&P. Nobody got anything in the nervous water up top, but I scored first in the first pool with a nice feisty 14 incher that came on a chartreuse and white spinner bait. Jeff was beginning to get some interest in his tubes and he pulled up another 14 incher up out of the same pool. Bruce stuck to his Husky Jerk without a lot of success, but given the mist and the

quality of light we had that morning; LOTS of photographs were in order of most of the fish. I'm really looking forward to seeing how they came out when Bruce's article comes out. Jeff hung the first real quality fish down below where we caught the first two fish. His rod looked like it was headed toward what we in the technical fields call the "minimum yield point" when suddenly the line goes slack and Jeff almost smacks himself in the face with the recoil. It was an obvious 'bite-off', courtesy of a toothy critter in a part of the river where I had never even considered there might be one. You can be sure more investigation on my part will take place.

We caught a few more fish over the next couple of miles. Along with the fishing, Jeff was doing some observation about whether the spawn was beginning. We checked out some 'historical' spots that usually hold nests every year. We found no definitive nests in the areas we checked. We did see a few areas that had perhaps seen some preliminary activity...some "practice fanning" if you will. One spot looked like it may actually have contained eggs, but without his 'scope' (a long stove pipe with a piece of glass in the end) it was difficult to say definitively but what we do have is the right water temps (it was 58 degrees almost all day) the right time of year and water levels (so far). Given how many big fish we saw paired up and tripled up, all the elements of a good spawn are in place I think. I think all we need now is the proper amount of daylight and it'll be on.



Two Days in the Valley cont'd

We got to one particularly good area and Jeff began to really connect with his hand-tied black J&Ps. And of course...guess who left his jig box at home because he was just so sure that jerkbaits and spinner baits would be the "bait de jour"....grrrrrr. But of course, Jeff goes into 'guide mode' and made sure both Bruce and I had black J & Ps tied on and suddenly, we were having Kelble-like success. We both caught 16+ inchers and the smallest fish caught all day was the 14 inch back at the top of the float. These were all healthy active fish, no sign of lesions, save a couple of fish that had obvious healed sores, which was another good sign as well. We caught fish further into this float than I ever do as well, which is a great thing to see. Personally speaking, what was most gratifying to see was fish...fish everywhere.



We were spooking fish all along the float, and not just small fish, I mean quality fish. Most of them looked better than 15 and I saw a couple that would be pushing 20 inches.

So I think overall the south fork of the Shenandoah is doing very well this year and barring any unforeseen natural catastrophes...we should have a pretty good spawn this year. Hope to see all of you out my way at some point this year. And I better get a phone call or email when you DO come.



Conservation Corner

By Herschel Finch

So if you're a stickler for chronological order, you came here first, but I'm betting most of you are not. Therefore, I'll dispense with a snappy opening to the story. Oh relax...I'll have the catchy 'hook' at the front of the Conservation Corner next month.

On Monday, before our epic fishing excursion I got a neat opportunity to wander around two counties with Jeff Kelble and Bruce Ingram as Bruce conducted his interview with Jeff. I was just riding along and listening for the most part. It gave me some really good exposure to what exactly Jeff does in his role as RiverKeeper. Trust me, as it turns out, it's not near as glamorous, nor as fun as you would imagine.

Our first stop was a small farm way up in Elizabeth Furnace in Shenandoah County. We were far beyond the National Forest area and deep into the hinterlands of what is locally called "Fort Valley". Alan Lehman, the Shenandoah Riverkeeper Agricultural Projects Manager had observed, during one of his aircraft surveys, a small farm perched on the banks of Passage Creek that looked like it had a feed lot directly next to the stream. It took us a good 45 minutes to drive up into Fort Valley and to get to this small "farmette". That's just how far back off the main road it was, and sure enough, they had staked out a feed lot directly next to Passage Creek. The feed lot was complete with a small shelter, large hay 'rounds' and access to the creek for the cattle (actually a half dozen bulls in this case) to water themselves. The banks had been stripped of vegetation and, where a culvert ran under the road, a pile of manure/mud/and other muck was at least a foot deep, if not more.

Bruce asked Jeff if his next step was to go knock on the farmers door and the answer was surprising, to me anyway. "No, we don't do that anymore". Jeff went on to explain that when you just show up at people's doors, they feel as if their privacy has been invaded. The approach these days is to craft a letter to the landowner first, explaining who he and Alan are, and why what the farmer is doing with the livestock is bad for the stream, his property, his neighbors downstream, and his livestock in particular. The letter also points out the regulatory issues that they may indeed be violating. Also in this letter, the farmer is pointed toward resources available to them to help them move their herds away from the stream and to help out financially with fencing, new feed barns, watering/cooling stations, and hay storage, etc. It sounded like an excellent approach to me. Jeff then added, more often than not, a follow-up visit usually shows there had been no effort toward making any changes. At this point they usually turn the issue over to DEQ and VDACS (Virginia Dept of Agricultural and Consumer Services) in the form of an official complaint and let them handle it.

After we left this particular farm, we headed up Woodstock Tower Road to cross over the ridge and drop down (and I do mean DOWN...as in a switchback, hairpin road) into Woodstock for a look at one of Jeff's success stories. There is a 'grandfathered' dairy operation just inside the Woodstock town limits that sits directly astride a good-sized stream. Just upstream of this farm, the water is clear, cold, and surprisingly deep. Cress and other water plants are everywhere, along with the warm-season grasses that 'should' be growing there. As we neared the farm area, we could see where the banks have been eroded and tramped down by dairy cattle entering the stream to drink and cool off. The banks, naturally, are basically hard-pan and devoid of any plant life. The stream is almost twice as wide as it should have been and very shallow. There was also a string of concrete Jersey barriers placed end to end right next to the road. Jeff said was the wall where they dropped silage to feed the herd...OR at least they used to.

Recently this particular dairy operation had begun moving toward a more environmentally sustainable operation. For the most part, the cattle have been fenced out of the stream bed and the stream banks are starting to see vegetation growth again. The spot along the road with the Jersey barriers is no longer used as the feed lot. The cattle are now being fed further away from the stream and new buildings have been constructed for milking and feeding. Drainage has been improved around their silage bunks and they have covered the contents of the bunks as well to prevent leeching and runoff into the stream. Jeff said it's not a perfect farm; they still have some issues he'd like to see addressed, but, for an operation this size, they have made some good progress and he's pleased about what we saw.

All in all, it was a very interesting afternoon riding around listening to Jeff talk about how he actually does his job and getting a chance to see exactly what's involved with the "field work" of the Riverkeepers. Personally speaking, you can keep the 80% of the job taken up with plowing through construction, development, and discharge permits and meeting with environmental lawyers. Can you say "snooze-fest"? I knew you could! But I have to tell you, I sure am glad Jeff and the entire Potomac/Shenandoah Riverkeeper Organization is around to do all this for us.

PRSC

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PRSC would like to thank the following for contributing to Member Night and being friends of PRSC.



PRSC Wishes to Thank our Recent Speakers

July 2011 - Jeff Little. Blueridgekayakfishing.com

August 2011 - Beau Beasley, www.beaubeasley.com

September 2011 - Walt Cary of Walt's Poppers

October 2011 - Capt. Steve Chaconas,
www.nationalbass.com/steve.htm

January 2012 - Brent Walls, Upper Potomac River Manager

February 2012 - William Heresniak,
www.eastern trophies.com

2012 Contest Results

April 2012 Report By Wallace Harvey

Great news this month! It took us almost till June last year to have this many entrants in the fishing contest. This year with the warm weather and nice waters we have lots of new entrants. This is the way it should be. But, what we need is more information on Section I. It seems that the fishing is in Section II and Section III. Anyone been on Section I?

I was hoping to be able to relate better on what the fish were caught on and what technique was used. However, no one reported on that. Any chance we can get you to expand on the information? Us armatures need all the help we can get. Is there any particular pattern that you have found this year?

One passing bit of information I would like to pass along to everyone. As we go fishing from one section of water to another or even more important to different rivers or lakes, it is becoming more important that we wash the hull of your watercraft. Kayaks, pontoons, and canoes can carry algae, toxins, disease, or other bad things from one body of water to another. It takes only a few minutes and can save our waters a lot of trouble. Soap and water works for boat hulls as well as it does for our hands when we are sick. Our waters are greatly improved and doing better. Let's not take steps backwards but carrying problems from one river to another. Thanks.

2012 Results

Section 1, Biggest Fish: Jeff Kelble, 21"

Section 1, Best 5 Fish:

Section 2, Biggest Fish: Erica Kelble, 19"

Section 2, Best 5 Fish: Randy Chandler, 81.5"

Section 3, Biggest Fish: Bill Pearl, 20"

Section 3, Best 5 Fish: Bill Pearl, 86.5"

Largest on Fly:

New Member:

William Schriver Award:

Grover Cleveland Award:

The Potomac River Smallmouth Club was founded in 1988 as a non-profit recreational club in accordance with IRS section 501(c)(7). Dues are \$35/year. Monthly meetings are held at 7:30 PM on the last Wednesday of each month (except December) at the Vienna Volunteer Firehouse. Club by-laws and member rosters are published once a year and available during meetings or upon request. The Club newsletter, "The Buzz", is emailed to all members prior to each month's meeting and is available at local fishing/tackle shops. Articles, photographs and general information relating to smallmouth bass fishing are solicited. The Buzz reserves the right to edit all materials submitted for publication. Observations, conclusions and opinions expressed in The Buzz are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the club, its officers, or the editor. All materials submitted become the property of the club. Every effort will be made to return photographs at the monthly meetings, however the printing process occasionally results in the destruction of a photograph. Send copies and make sure YOU have the negative.