

Cast Away

The Delaware River's Summer Fishing Opportunities



by Art Michaels

The Delaware River is a great destination for tangling with trout, smallmouth bass, walleyes, muskies, striped bass and much more. Dave Arnold, the Commission's Area 5 fisheries manager, says, "From Hancock to Hankins, NY, anglers can catch brown and rainbow trout especially when the summers are cool. Try early in the morning or in the early part of the evening." Arnold says that trout fishing can also be good into the night if an aquatic insect hatch is on. Nighttime hatches can keep the fish actively feeding.

"From Hankins to the Lackawaxen River, the trout presence gradually declines," Arnold says, "and when the trout aren't hitting, you can fish for smallmouth bass and perhaps some walleyes." But, Arnold says, smallmouth bass and walleyes begin to pick up more as a steady fishery, but smallmouths are caught throughout the day and walleyes hit best after dark to dawn because of the warm temperatures.

From the confluence of the Lackawaxen River to the Lehigh River at Easton, anglers are definitely going to be able to get smallmouth bass, walleyes, muskies, striped bass, panfish and carp, Arnold says. "These fish are available throughout the day, depending on how warm it is," Arnold says, "but even for warmwater fish it can get too hot for their feeding." Arnold says that even though the heat can cool the fishing, anglers should still look for gamefish at the confluences of larger tributaries.

"One the best spots for stripers is the Mongaup River confluence on the New York side just upriver of Matamoras, PA," Arnold says. "Sunfish are active all day. The heart of the

muskellunge area lies in the Delaware Water Gap National Recreational Area downriver to the confluence of the Lehigh River at Easton."

"The Delaware's fisheries are diverse between Easton and the head of tide at Morrisville, about 50 miles," says Commission Area Fisheries Manager Mike Kaufmann. "The fisheries there are dominated by American shad, smallmouth bass and channel catfish, with other fisheries for redbreast sunfish, rock bass, striped bass, walleyes, carp and white suckers."

Kaufmann says that anglers catch the smallmouth bass mainly in cobble or rocky areas and that the smallmouths dominate the summer action.

"Anglers find channel catfish and white catfish mostly in pools from Easton to Morrisville," Kaufmann says. "Channel catfish are abundant and provide good bottom fishing from early April to late October." Kaufmann says that both nighttime and daytime fishing with live bait or with cut or stink baits is effective.

"Anglers catch redbreast sunfish and rock bass in the rocky shallows of pools," Kaufmann says. He notes that redbreasts are scrappy fighters and that they're readily caught with worms, plastic grubs and small spinnerbaits. "The rock bass are generally small in this stretch, but they may be caught while fishing in redbreast sunfish habitat," Kaufmann says.

Kaufmann adds that striped bass are present in the area of New Hope to Morrisville from early April until September with the most large fish there in April and May. "Throughout the rest of the river, large numbers of

small stripers ranging from 8 inches to 18 inches are present from mid-June to early September," Kaufmann says. "Larger stripers can be found during the heat of the summer at creek mouths from Easton to Morrisville."

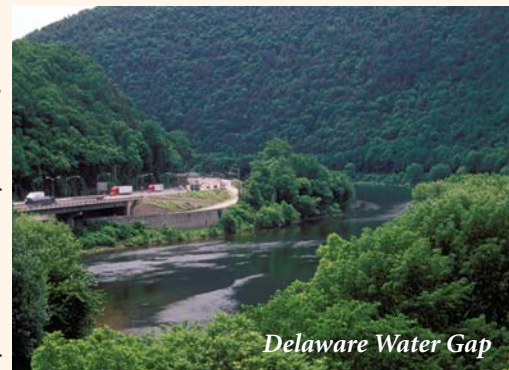
Walleyes are present in low densities from Easton to Morrisville, Kaufmann says. "Even though anglers regularly catch good-sized walleyes, the overall abundance of walleyes doesn't match that of other major Pennsylvania rivers," he says. "You'll find walleyes near large creek mouths in winter, when they become most vulnerable to angling." □

Delaware River Water Trail

The Delaware River Water Trail extends some 250 miles from Hancock, NY to Trenton, NJ. The Delaware River Greenway Partnership sponsors this water trail. The group is creating maps, guides and a web site. Visit www.drpgp.org.

For details on Delaware River access and amenities, visit the Commission's web site, www.fish.state.pa.us, and on the main page's left side, hold your cursor over "Boat," and then click on "Boating Near You." Then navigate to "County Guides."

The Delaware River and Estuary are managed with different fishing regulations from those of Commonwealth inland waters. Visit the Commission's web site, www.fish.state.pa.us for more details.



Delaware Water Gap

Photo—Art Michaels