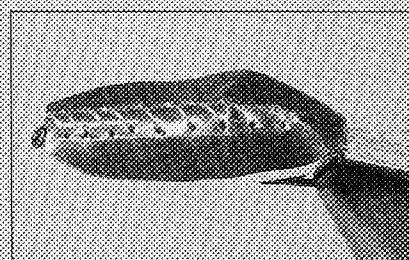


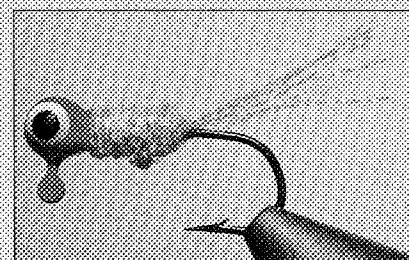
WIPRUD MYSIS

HOOK: #4-6 Mustad 81001BR.
EYES: 1/20- to 1/30-ounce dumbbell eyes.
ANTENNAE: Two strands of pearl Krystal Flash.
CARAPACE: Pearl braid or Mylar tubing over pink or chartreuse vernille.
BODY: Alternating pink and pearl translucent cylindrical beads.



SMONIG FLUTTER FLY

HOOK: #6 Mustad 38941 or equivalent streamer hook.
BODY: Gold or silver Peel 'n Stick Mylar stuck back to back with hook shank in the center.
NOTE: Use monofilament thread and a sewing needle to lash the Mylar securely to the hook shank. Use Krazy Glue to secure the stitching. Use this fly as a dropper in a two-fly rig.



ZSA ZSA

HOOK: 1/16- to 1/64-ounce jig head with jig collar, painted fluorescent pink, red, orange, or chartreuse.
THREAD: Monofilament.
TAIL: Pearl Krystal Flash.
BODY: Pearl or yellow Diamond Braid.

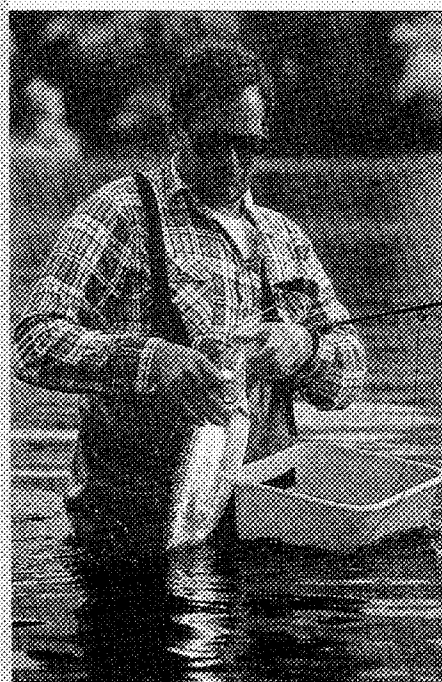
often corral prey along current seams and at thermal boundaries. Locations that mimic these conditions in rivers can collect large numbers of fish and cause them to feed opportunistically, or at least strike at your flies. Some people think that, like salmon, shad don't eat in freshwater, but biologists find digested food matter in shad stomachs, and I have on numerous occasions had shad defecate in my net as much as 250 miles from the ocean. Unlike certain anadromous fish, a shad's digestive tract remains functional during spawning. [For more information on this topic, read Brian Wiprud's article "Match the Hatch for Shad" at www.flyfisherman.com/shad/. THE EDITOR.]

Strong current seams and tributary confluences are perhaps the easiest-to-identify spots to find shad willing to take a fly. Any place a creek comes into the main river, especially one with a strong flow, attracts shad. When the main river temperature is still in the 40s or 50s, the confluence of warmer water from a creek can make these spots even better. Likewise, warmwater infusions from power-plant discharges or storm drainages can put shad in a feeding mood. Anywhere you're likely to find rising water temperatures between 55 and 72 degrees is ideal.

Conversely, cooling water works in your favor any time the river reaches 73 degrees, the temperature at which shad spawn and are less inclined to feed. A cool rain or colder tributary that lowers the river temperature can turn distracted spawning fish back into schooling fish ready to strike. Even when you see spawning or dead fish that appear to signal the end of the shad season, more fish may still be on their way upriver, and a drop in water temperature can give you an extended season.

Lighting conditions. Contrary to popular opinion, shad continue to move upriver in bright sun and in the middle of the day. I've often read or heard that shad prefer to move in low light, but this isn't the only time to catch them. My best days are sunny, cloudless days between the hours of 10 A.M. and 2 P.M. This popular misconception about shad activity probably stems from lulls at certain hours. Early morning, before the sun reaches the water, is productive but when the sun hits the water, shad drop into deeper water. When they adjust to the bright light around 10 A.M., they once again start to ascend the rapid. Many anglers go home before then.

In the middle of the day, passing clouds or boat traffic can cast shadows that reduce shad movement and inclination to strike a fly. Consistent lighting, such as a steady overcast or steady bright sun, keeps shad moving upriver all day.



Shad sometimes feed in fresh water and prefer small, white or translucent flies with a dab of bright fluorescent color. Long casts are sometimes required while shad fishing and a stripping basket reduces line tangles.

Shad Techniques

The drift. Using a standard weight-forward floating line, an ordinary down-and-across wet-fly swing, preferably through a seam in the current, is the best presentation. Cast downstream at a 45-degree angle and use upstream mends to slow the progress of the fly, and keep the fly either broadside to the fish or facing upstream at all times. Keep the rod tip low after the cast, pointing at the water and tracking the drift of your fly. You need to be in constant communication with your fly to know when to set the hook after a shad takes. Sometimes when shad feel the hook point, they dart to one side or surge forward; if the line is relatively tight they often hook themselves.

Line mending is crucial to a good drift. Too much belly in the line compromises your ability to connect with the fish. There should be a straight line between where your stripping hand grips the line and where the fly is in the water column. I wrap the fly line once around my stripping finger to make sure it doesn't slip when a shad inhales the fly. At times a mild jigging or pumping action triggers strikes when the standard swing fails to produce. A rhythmic one-foot lift of the rod tip, about once every three to five seconds, does the trick. Don't do this too fast or with too much force because you'll pull the fly out of the strike zone.

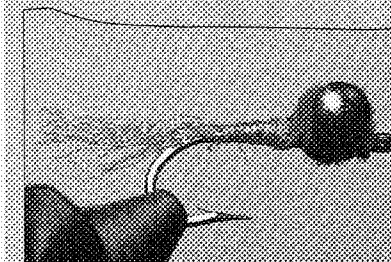
Tackle. While sinking or sinking-tip fly lines work for shad, their attributes are unnecessary when fishing water 5 feet deep or less. Floating lines with weighted flies, 6- to 9-foot leaders, and the proper technique keep the fly down where it needs to be and are easier to cast. If you use a mild jigging action, a floating line imparts an undulating up-and-down motion to the fly that can trigger a strike. With sinking lines, the fly doesn't jig up and down as much as dart across the current. Too stiff a leader and tippet can also adversely affect the drift—an 18-inch 2X or 3X tippet (6-pound test) is ideal.

Use a 6-weight rod for American shad or a 4- or 5-weight rod for hickory shad. If you're proficient at palming your reel, inexpensive rim-control fly reels are fine. Wading cleats give you the traction to wade strong currents and reach seams in the river next to the main channel. Shad usually stay in the deepest water possible when approaching a rapid, and to reach some of these spots you must be able to get to the middle of the river. A back support belt doubles as a wading belt and prevents your back from tiring early in the day.

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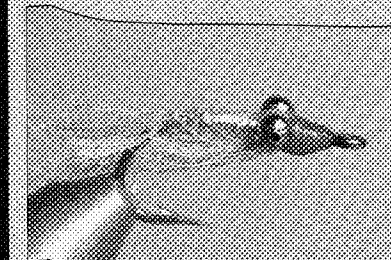


Shad are a strong, acrobatic fish that will test the limits of your trout tackle. The Delaware River (above) is the best-known fishery on the East Coast.



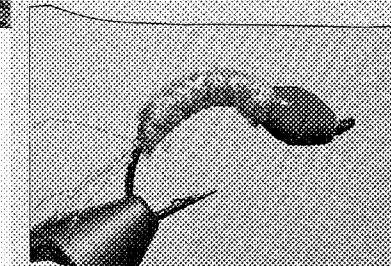
BIFULCO

HOOK: #6-8 Mustad saltwater #34007 or equivalent.
THREAD: Monofilament.
TAIL: Pearl or yellow Krystal Flash.
BODY: Same as tail.
EYES: Medium (1/30 ounce) plated dumbbell eyes.
HEAD: Pink, chartreuse, orange, or red vernille.



GOTCHA

HOOK: #6-8 Mustad 34007.
THREAD: Pink 6/0.
EYES: Silver bead chain.
TAIL: Pearl Flashabou or Krystal Flash.
BODY: Pearl Diamond Braid.
WING: Tan calf tail (shown), craft fur, or Aric Fox.



PSEUDOPOD

HOOK: #8 Mustad 81001BR.
THREAD: Fine monofilament thread.
HEAD: Small pink, orange, or gold cone head or 5/32" gold tungsten bead.
TAIL: Pearl Krystal Flash.
BODY: Pearl Diamond Braid over lead-substitute wire.