

movement and light is that bucks will move midday while roe run mostly in the mornings and evenings, sun or no sun. You're likely to catch bigger fish early and late. The prevailing conditions that really matter are water level and the presence of large numbers of fish. Low water is usually not good because a rapid's channels become atrophied, making the fish less inclined to migrate. Throughout the river, a lack of strong flow will stymie the shad migration. High water in the rapids can be very productive, though dicey wading, and usually the shad will hit farther up the channel because the lip of the pool and shallow water have moved farther up.

Shad are in the river in April, but the wadeable rapids (generally above Port Jervis) don't see good numbers of shad until late May. Numerous rapids are visible and accessible from New York Route 97, and shoulder parking is commonplace. Both mild and steep rapids are productive. The Roebling Bridge at the Lackawaxen has an adjacent parking lot on the Pennsylvania side and would be a good place to get your feet wet. Just downstream of the bridge on the Pennsylvania side, the main channel is very obvious, though the pool is not particularly large. Two mild rapids down Route 97 from the bridge are also good. Continuing upriver, other good spots would be the two rapids up from the Lackawaxen, Cedar Rapids, Ten Mile River Access, and Skinner's Falls.

Tackle is a somewhat subjective matter. A medium action 7 to 9 weight outfit is great when coupled with a floating weight forward line. You can use a sink tip line, but I don't feel it puts the optimal drift on the fly and makes casting weighted flies even more of a pain. In clear water on bright days, 7-foot 6-pound test leaders are recommended, but other times you can get away with 4 feet of mono up to 14-pound test. Wade with chest waders, Korkers, and a comfortable life vest.


Shad flies are a more subjective topic. In the rapids all kinds of small weighted flies of various bright yellow, green, white, and red hues work fine, including many bonefish patterns. Sparkly body materials work, but too much flash, at times, can spook shad. Go easy on the tail material, too. I currently prefer sizes 4 and 6, long- and short-shanked saltwater hooks. Tying your flies shank-down helps prevent snagging and increases solid roof-of-the-mouth hooks.

Pack an ample assortment of flies. There are times when pool or staging shad demand variety and every time you change your fly, you get a hit. Don't go shad fishing in the rapids without small pink-headed flies. I consider them essential for taking shad after the sun hits the water. My favorite is the Zsa Zsa, made of a small pink round-headed jig (or lead eyes), white sparkle body, short sparkle tail.

On a good, full day of shad fishing an angler might land 12 fish, with an excellent day yielding half again that many. You expect some fish better than

six pounds when you hit the peak of the run. As a fighting fish, shad are right up there with bonefish, tarpon, and salmon. If you've never fished the rapids for shad, I can only hope that you soon have the opportunity to find out for yourself just what a great sport fish the shad really is!

Brian M. Wiprud is a Brooklyn novelist who writes outdoors pieces for N.Y. Press. He was recently selected poet centerfold of *The Macallandar* '96.

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