

SHAD SOLUTIONS

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PHOTOS BY RICHARD FRANKLIN

Many fly rodders who are keen for new challenges seek out the Delaware River's annual shad migration. As someone who truly loves fly fishing for shad, I have sent my share of fellow anglers to the upper river for a crack at this lively quarry. But sometimes it's easy to forget just how steep the learning curve can be, and many shad anglers on both the Delaware and other rivers have found their efforts frustrated.

Shad have peculiar dynamics and behavior that can be difficult to fathom. Why do they surge upstream with unbridled appetites on some days, while on other days they sit sullenly by the thousands in deep pools with their mouths clamped shut? Why do these plankton eaters hit flies or darts at all? "Why," many anglers ask, "don't I ever hit the jackpot and catch a mess of these fish?" Their experiences astream boil down to three basic predicaments.

Problem 1: *The shad were here yesterday, but they're nowhere to be found today.*

Unfortunately, shad do not move upriver at a constant rate or in uniform school densities, which means you sometimes find fishless gaps in the migration run. Certain temperature ranges and water-flow rates encourage the shad to move in large numbers, during which times they are most likely to hit flies. While heavy spring runoff may bolster the migration in the

