

SHAD SOLUTIONS



▲ Shad are most likely to hit at certain key points in the river. Look for areas just below rapids and narrow stretches of the river. You may need a boat to get to some of the choice holes.

▲ Shad have excellent vision. They spook easily, especially from threats above the water, so you must use stealth when approaching likely lies.

sure that if there are a lot of shad moving up the river, the fly is down to their level, and you're still only getting short strikes or light pecks, that another fly pattern would work better. Generally speaking, you should use the smallest fly that you can fish at the shad's level. Many patterns and colors work, but the top producers are pink-headed front-weighted flies dressed with sparkly bodies and sparse sparkly tails. The same patterns in chartreuse also work well, though these are perhaps best when the sun is off the water or when the river is cool. In low, clear water and bright conditions, your teeny little

fly might actually spook the shad, at which time a similar dressing substituting white or black for sparkly stuff is a prudent choice.

There are odd times when shad will not hit the same fly twice, or when they do but you can't get a solid hookup. I encounter this most often at tailraces where a small pod of shad seems frightened of ascending a rapid. The problem is that you're not presenting your fly to a passing parade but to a peevish grandstand that tires quickly of your pink- and green-headed flies. The trick here is to keep changing flies. You may catch one or two fish on one pattern, then get no hits at all.



▲ The reward for hard work, patience, and perseverance can be a fine specimen such as this.

If you change to another pattern, chances are you'll pick up another fish or two.

Some anglers contend that shad aren't really trying to eat the fly. This theory holds that shad feel threatened by lures and strike in self-defense. This is certainly true at least some of the time, mostly in low light or murky water. Under these conditions, a larger fly or a even a fly-rod spinner can be the lure of choice to turn those strikes into solid hookups.

While there are certainly times and places where just about anybody can throw a dart or fly in the river and come up with a shad, there's a decided advantage to employing technique rather than trusting to luck for success. Shad are a more complicated gamefish than many anglers realize, and refining your tactics will improve your catch.

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