

Cashiers Outside

Chattooga headwaters full of early summer brownies

By David Joy
Staff Writer

With easy access off of Bull Pen Road just a few miles south of the cross-roads on Highway 107, the headwaters of the Chattooga River offer a unique challenge to fly fishermen. A much more technical fish than the lower stocked section of river in South Carolina, the headwaters often make even the most experienced fishermen earn every bite.

One of the primary differences between the headwaters of the Chattooga and the section once the river crosses the South Carolina line is bottom structure. Whereas the lower river fishes much like the Tuckaseegee's freestone bottom, the headwaters offer wide plunge pools and deep gorge runs much like the neighboring Horsepasture and Whitewater Rivers.

Though fishing can be difficult at times, the quality of the fish located in the upper Chattooga easily makes up for hours spent without a bite. Primarily a brown trout stream, the deep pools hold many trout over 15 inches with a handful of 20+ inch browns as well. Furthermore, the swift current and deep pools make the fight with fish on line that much more entertaining.

Dawn and dusk generally produce heavy hatches of



Photos by David Joy/Staff

This 13-inch brown trout gobbled a bead-head stonefly imitation as the fly descended into a plunge pool.

blue winged olives, mottled brown caddis, and gray caddis hatches with little brown

stoneflies and yellow sallys making appearances on the water throughout the day.

During these early morning and late evening hours, fishermen will often see

trout rising through the ripples and hear the slurp of a brown taking a fly from the surface. Fishing dry fly patterns to imitate the five major insects listed above will often nab fish.

Midday fishing can often prove more difficult as rising temperatures push fish into the bottoms of deep pools. However, high-sticking nymphs at the heads of plunge pools and bottom-bouncing weighted lines with strike indicators along deep runs will often produce fish. Larger stonefly patterns from size 8 to 12 in dark colors can be used to target these fish. Try both bead head and sili-leg versions of popular stonefly imitations like the Kauffman's Stone for midday trout.

Though the lower section of the Chattooga headwaters offer many runs that can be waded safely, the deep plunge pools and gorges

are treacherous for even the most advanced fishermen. Luckily the section located off of Bull Pen Road has an extensive network of trails that fishermen can hike along until they reach a fishable section of river.

Due to the dangerous sections it is advisable to take both a wading stick and a fishing partner to limit accidental falls. Furthermore, fishing with a friend always brings a little more satisfaction when the line goes taut and the fight is on.

As summer draws near and the mercury rises on back-porch thermometers trout fishing will inevitably become more difficult. Yet in the early morning hours when the sun just starts to burn off the fog and in those fading minutes of daylight each evening the flies will hatch and the trout will be waiting. Hopefully, you'll be standing there with a fly rod in hand when it happens.

are treacherous for even the most advanced fishermen. Luckily the section located off of Bull Pen Road has an extensive network of trails that fishermen can hike along until they reach a fishable section of river.



Weekly Fishing Report

By David Joy



Watershed	Water Level	Stocking	Productivity	Active Species	Hatches	Fly / Bait
Glenville	-2.1 feet	N/A	Good	Largemouth Bass	N/A	Jerkbaits and Crankbaits
Bear Lake	-1.6 feet	5/9-5/13	Good	Largemouth Bass	N/A	Spinnerbaits and Jerkbaits
Jocassee	-3.6 feet	None	Very Good	Trout	N/A	Nightcrawlers & Shiners at night
Keowee	-4.2 feet	None	Good	Largemouth and Spotted Bass	N/A	Swimbait and Flukes
Tuckaseegee	N/A	5/9-5/13	Very Good	Brook Trout and Rainbow Trout	Mottled Caddis Yellow Sally	#12 Elk Hair Sally #12 Sili-Leg Prince
Chattooga	N/A	5/20 E. Fork: 5/24	Very Good	Brook Trout and Brown Trout	Mottled Caddis Yellow Sally	#12 Stimulator #12 Kauffman's Stone
Horsepasture	N/A	Wild	Very Good	Rainbow Trout	Gray Caddis Yellow Sally	#12 Thunderhead #12 Hare's Ear
Whitewater	N/A	Wild	Very Good	Rainbow Trout	Gray Caddis Yellow Sally	#12 Adams Parachute #12 Hare's Ear

Best Fishing Times Based on Lunar Cycle (darker shade indicates best fishing)

June 1	June 2	June 3	June 4	June 5	June 6	June 7
10:42A-12:42P	11:35A-1:35P	12:30P-2:30P	1:23P-3:23P	2:16P-4:16P	3:07P-5:07P	3:57P-5:57P
11:12P-1:12A	12:05A-2:05A	1:00A-3:00A	1:53A-3:53A	2:46A-4:46A	3:37A-5:37A	4:27A-6:27A



The Chattooga is also prime habitat for many sunfish that will eagerly take a fly. This redbreast sunfish took a Pheasant Tail nymph.



At left, this 17-inch brownie took a No. 10 stone as the fly bounced bottom along a deep run. At right, an underwater view of the 17-inch brown.