

# CASHIERS LIVING

## Local guide first to brave Tuckaseegee without Dillsboro Dam



Photo submitted

**Matt Canter stares out over where the Dillsboro Dam used to halt the flow of the Tuckaseegee and prepares to make his line.**

**By David Joy**  
Staff Writer

When local fishing guide Matt Canter set out from the Highway 107 bridge at the Tuckaseegee River on Thursday, March 25 he was planning for something bigger than trout.

With the recent demolition of the Dillsboro Dam opening the river from Cullowhee to Lake Fontana, Canter was hoping to be the first to navigate the passage where the dam once stood.

“We put in at about 10:00 a.m. and fished some dry flies through a caddis hatch with some blue wing olives coming off,” Canter said.

browns.”

Surprisingly, trout had even moved into the section of river that used to sit stagnant for a quarter mile behind the dam. Low oxygen levels and little flow kept trout out of this section for nearly one hundred years, but since the removal they are already moving in.

“We kept going past where everyone used to take out and fished that section that had been dammed up for so long,” Canter said. “Steve actually got quite a few strikes down in through there,



Photo submitted

**Matt Canter exits the rapid where the Dillsboro Dam once stood, and becomes the first to navigate the freed river.**

when the water’s on. So much so, that Steve and Henry, the other guys that were in the boat, got out and walked around it.”

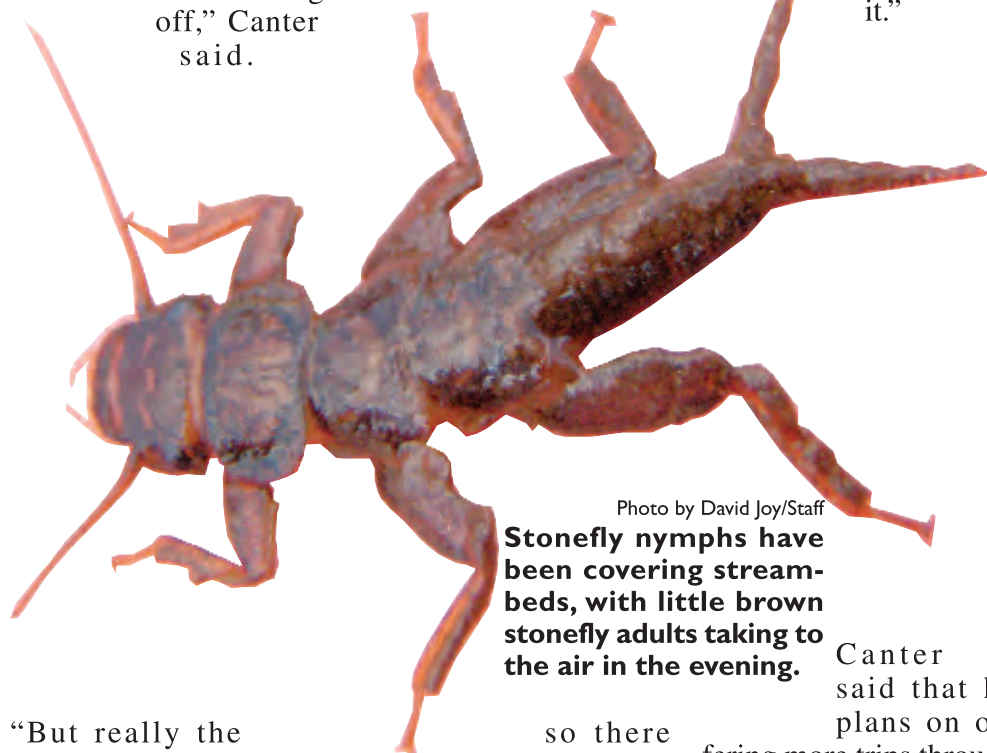


Photo by David Joy/Staff

**Stonefly nymphs have been covering streambeds, with little brown stonefly adults taking to the air in the evening.**

“But really the whole purpose of it was sort of to float that section that had been dammed up for so long.”

Along the trip, Canter and two partners that shared the journey were able to pick off some nice trout. As expected, most of the fish remained feeding on nymphs along the bottom, although a few were taken on top and one of the passengers did have luck on a large streamer.

“We caught a good many fish on caddis dry flies, but most of our fish were caught on nymphs,” Canter explained. “When the water came up, Steve Zoukis started throwing a Meat Whistle, a big chartrreuse streamer, and had a bunch of big follows and caught some nice

so there are some fish moving in there already.”

As the boat traveled down the straightaway towards the Highway 441 bridge, Canter and the crew were floating toward a large rapid where the dam once stood. At this point, the others in the boat took refuge along the bank, while Canter braved the rapid alone, becoming the first to navigate that stretch of the Tuckaseegee since the dam fell.

“As far as we know we were the first people to run that section,” Canter said. “We saw them take out the silt fence and everything and there wasn’t anybody in front of us. It was a good little rapid in there. It’s a really good bump

Canter said that he plans on offering more trips through there from here on. The Dillsboro Dam used to serve as a dividing line between trout water (above) and smallmouth bass territory (below). Canter said that the removal of the dam should open the river up for both species.

The most productive patterns on the day were #16 Black Caddis and #18 Blue Wing Olive (BWO) dry flies, and San Juan Worms and Prince Nymphs for nymph patterns.

**Current fishing trends:**

Hatchery Supported waters opened back up for trout fishing on Saturday, April 3 following a month of closed season. Now all of the North Carolina



Photo submitted

**Cashiers business owner, Steve Zoukis shows off a nice brown trout taken on a chartreuse Meat Whistle as the group moved down the Tuckaseegee.**

trout waters are open for fishing within the regulations governing each designation of water.

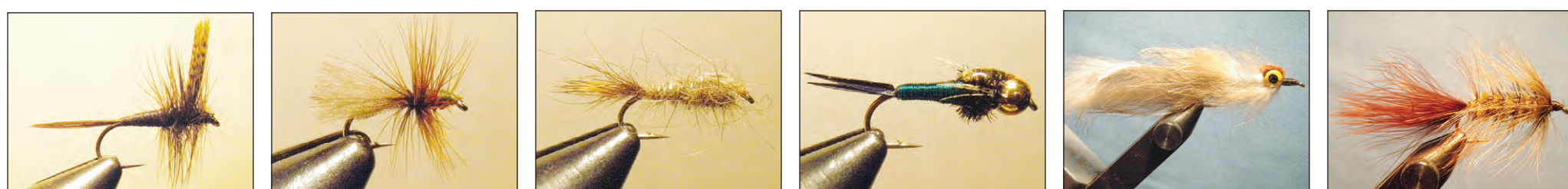
Hatches have begun emerging on all of the surrounding waters, particularly on the Tuckaseegee, with large baetis mayfly hatches coming off in the evening and sporadic little brown stonefly hatches. Some caddisflies have also been seen in the mornings and evenings.

Popular dry flies include the Black Caddis, CDC Caddis, BWO, and Hendrickson in sizes 14-18. Popular nymphs include the Bead Head Prince, Hare’s Ear, Pheasant Tail, and Copper John in sizes 14-18. Large streamers have also shown effective in deep holes, with the Muddler Minnow, Woolly Bugger, Zonker Minnow, and Matuka moving lot of holding fish.



Photos by David Joy

**Above, Mayfly nymphs are abundant in surrounding streams clinging to the undersides of rocks and awaiting their moment to emerge. Below, Baetis mayflies like this one have been emerging in swarms on the Tuckaseegee River throughout each evening this spring.**



Photographed and tied by David Joy/Staff

**Above are some popular flies for local area waters right now. From left, the Dark Hendrickson (dry fly), CDC Caddis (dry fly), Hare’s Ear (nymph), Copper John (nymph), Zonker Minnow (streamer), and Woolly Bugger (streamer) are all producing springtime trout.**