

WCU alum David Joy has first book published

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A Western Carolina University graduate is enjoying the limelight after having his first book published.

David Joy, who received a bachelor's degree in literature from WCU in 2007 and a master's degree in professional writing in 2009, can now find his book "Growing Gills: A Fly Fisherman's Journey" on store shelves. He started the book in spring 2009 and the publishing journey took the better part of two years.

The book attempts to illuminate a life spent on water. Themes range from environmentalism to family, Rousseau's "noble savage" to the ones that got away, places that remain wild to the worn cork of rods, the beauty of native trout to the art of fly tying.

"The inspiration for the work stems from a lifelong relationship with the piscine world. Ever since I was a child, I've been fascinated by fish: spending mornings watching television shows like 'Spanish Fly' and 'The Walker's Cay Chronicles', afternoons on mud banks casting to anything that would bite, and evenings reading field guides on North American fish," Joy said. "As I've grown older I started to question why this innate connection exists, and that questioning ultimately became the driving force behind this project."

Joy gives a lot of credit to the English department at Western Carolina. Associate Professor Deidre Elliott has been named as one of his major influences, as well as his friend and mentor.

Elliott had nothing but praise for Joy.

"He had the knowledge of nature to begin with and he practiced his craft and became a better



Mark Haskett

David Joy can't get enough of fishing.

writer," Elliott said.

"Every single person in that department helped shape the man I've become. From literature courses with folks like Dr. Annette Debo, Dr. Mimi Fenton, Dr. Brian Gastle, and Drs. Jim and Elizabeth Addison to creative writing courses with Deidre Elliott, Ron Rash, and Pamela Duncan, that department is responsible for my ongoing passion for language," Joy said. "There is a familial bond within that department, one that I felt even from professors whom I never had for class, and one that I still feel to this day."

One of the biggest struggles Joy had when writing the book was structure.

"Growing Gills is not chronological. Instead, the book is structured thematically in an attempt to pinpoint the specific reasons why I am obsessed with fish," Joy said.

"Growing Gills: A Fly Fisherman's Journey" is distributed through John F. Blair of Winston Salem and is available at all major outlets as well as regional bookstores. Some local stores where the book can be purchased are City lights in Sylva and Blue Ridge Books in Waynesville. Digital copies for both the Kindle and Nook will be available in the future.

Joy is currently in the process of making sure Hunter Library on campus has a copy and seeing if the Campus Bookstore on campus will carry copies.

Joy has a reading and book signing at City Lights in Sylva at 7 p.m. on Friday, Nov. 11. He will also have other reading throughout the region on future dates.

