



LINES and LEADERS

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**BLUEGRASS
CHAPTER TROUT
UNLIMITED**

JUNE 2006

**HIWASSEE RIVER
FLOAT & WADE
TRIP
JULY 15 & 16**

- WHERE:** Hiwassee River, Reliance, TN-
Approximately 4 hours from
Lexington
- GUIDES:** Southeastern Anglers, Reliance, TN
(www.southeasternanglers.com)
- LODGING:** Cabin Option **OR** Camping
Option at Reliance Fly & Tackle
- COSTS:** Full Day Float on Saturday-\$175
each angler
Optional half Day Float on Sunday-
\$112 (2 person min)
Cabin cost based on total number
staying (\$80 each approximately-
Price includes both nights)
Camping cost is \$30- price
includes both nights

powerhouse in Reliance Tennessee. The river is a tailrace fishery and yields trophy class rainbow and brown trout. Water quality in the Hiwassee River is exceptionally high in part because it is protected by State Wild and Scenic River Association. In the trophy trout section, it is common for anglers to catch football-shaped rainbows and browns to 20 inches, with a 16 incher becoming a regular occurrence. Summer is the best time to fish the river!

Dane Law gave a great presentation on the river at our May meeting and his guide service, Southeastern Anglers, will be taking us down the river. We are excited to float the river using top-of-the line McKenzie style drift boats and plan to do a full day, 6 mile float on Saturday, with a wade or half day float option on Sunday. The guided trip features experienced, high quality professional fishing guides, impeccably maintained boats and equipment and Dane's famous smoked chicken & potato salad shore lunch.

After a full day of fishing on Saturday, we will enjoy a steak dinner cookout and campfire provided for a small fee by Jerry, owner of Reliance Fly & Tackle. If you have never been on a float trip, this is the one to do! We will have a great weekend & the fishing is excellent this time of year!

Deadline for signing up for this trip is June 30th. THERE ARE ONLY 4 SPOTS LEFT ON THIS TRIP SO call or email David Blanton soon if you want to go on this great summer trip. davidblanton@alltel.net or 859-948-0017.



The Hiwassee Scenic River in Southeastern Tennessee is one of the best trout fisheries in the Southeast, and one of the best dry fly rivers in the eastern U.S. The River flows through the Cherokee National Forest below the Appalachia

CONNEAUT, OHIO

Echoes of a legend resound here in the streams near this quiet little town a few miles west of the Pennsylvania border. It's the steelhead, a rainbow trout much like those stocked in Kentucky's streams and rivers except they grow much larger and migrate from large bodies of water, Lake Erie in the case locally, to spawn.

It's that upstream migration that gave birth to steelhead in the Pacific Northwest as a fighting fish with no equal, particularly on a fly rod. Anglers rhapsodized over steelhead after tangling with them, so much that they were immortalized as the *champeen* of coldwater fishing. (Them's fightin' words to muskie and striper fishers, but steelheaders can be iron-jawed.)

The northwestern steelhead fishery soared in the '50's and '60's in rivers that drain to the Pacific – Deschutes, Klamath, Snake, Columbia and North Umpqua to name a few. These are rivers with boiling currents cascading through canyons and gorges and other rugged terrain. In other words, big brawling fish in big brawling rivers.

The combination proved irresistible to an army of fly fishers. Indeed, as the legend of the steelhead unfolded, many became addicted to their spell, speaking in hushed tones that smacked of worship. Otherwise normal, everyday men with careers and families took to the steelhead rivers during the spawning runs for days on end. Little else mattered but the relentless quest of steelhead. They remind me of the *really* hard-core Civil War re-enactors who become gaunt, sickly and hollow-eyed as they mimic to the hilt the pain and sacrifice of combat.

Steelhead proved so tough that a mere count of the day's catch was not the litmus test of success. It was how many were *hooked*. That's because long, wild, screaming runs with twisting, thrashing jumps left legions with only a limp line and the memory of a silver torpedo

with a faint band of reddish pink, the rainbow's universal signature. Landing a measly fourth of those hooked was a good day.

None of the Pacific coast steelhead phenomenon was lost on fishery biologists in the east. It didn't take long for them to learn rainbows, at least those genetically coded to swim up streams to spawn (why is one of nature's puzzles) proved remarkably suited for the tributaries feeding the Great Lakes.

Thus, generous steelhead stockings by Ohio, Pennsylvania and New York beginning in the 1960s has today produced a level of fishing its supporters boast as the world's best. Hard to argue. The streams, and small creeks that spill into Lake Erie from the three states are known globally as "Steelhead Alley." It's considered a regional industry just as automobile and tire making, pouring tens of millions annually into the economy in gas, motel, tackle, licenses, restaurant and other expenditures.

No frothy, boisterous rivers here like the Pacific's, but tranquil, meandering streams in postcard settings with pretty names like Conneaut, Chagrin, Canadaway, Chautauqua and Ashtabula and the more conventional, Elk, Walnut, Grand and Rocky.

My fishing adventures here in April and May proved to be a reflection of the steelhead's magnificent heritage, providing, as the saying goes, the thrill of victory and agony of defeat. It took just one fish to teach me their powerful ways. It ripped out the fly before I realized what was happening. A thoughtful but stern guide explained it was best to let go of the line when a steelhead was on the other end and heading for the barn, although not exactly in those words.

I stood helpless as a second fish tore off line well into the backing. It ran with typical steelhead with authority. For all I know, that steelhead today is in the middle Lake Erie thumbing its fin. A third fish made a determined

run downstream, but this time with me – and a guide sensitive to my surgically-bolstered bum knee – stumbling along on the bank in pursuit, 300 or 400 yards until it was brought to the net. Exhausted, I flopped spread-eagle on the bank and thanked the goddess of steelheading. The walk back was a victory lap.

The last provided a scene so fitting of the steelhead mystique I thought some unseen hand scripted it. It took the fly and shot straight up – a bolt of defiant silver flashing in the late afternoon sun – shaking loose the hook. I asked the guide what to do in those situations. "You bow to the fish," he replied. "That's all you can do." I removed my cap and made a deep, reverent bow, thinking maybe those gaunt, hollow-eyed worshipers had something going after all. Carl West

| <u>2006 UPDATED OUTINGS SCHEDULE:</u> | |
|--|---|
| JULY 15 & 16th: | Hiwassee River Float |
| AUGUST: | Smallmouth Trip |
| SEPT. 30TH: | Elkhorn Creek Canoe Float |
| OCT. 14 & 15th: | Watauga River & South Holston River |
| OCT. 28 & 29th: | Smoky Mountains-Hazel Creek Backcountry |
| DEC. 1-3rd: | Steelhead-Northern Ohio |

Details for individual trips will be provided each month in the Newsletter and the website. Trips and dates are subject to participation and water conditions and could change. For questions about an outing or to reserve a spot please e-mail David Blanton at davidblanton@alltel.net or call: 859-948-0017.

BECOME A BLUEGRASS TU BOARD MEMBER

Do you want to be more involved with the Chapter? Do you have new & exciting ideas for the Chapter and want to make a difference? Do you know a member that would be a great asset to TU? We are looking for enthusiastic, fresh faces to join the BGTU Board. There are currently several Officer and Committee Chair positions open on the BGTU Board. If you are interested in any of these spots, please email Dale White: dale@lexinvest.com or call 859-224-7073. Officers will be elected at the June 6th member meeting by the members and Committee Chairs will be appointed by the new Officers at the Board meeting on June 27th. The Officer positions are for a 1 year term, open for reelection for an additional year. The Committee Chairs serve 2 year terms.

Officer Positions:

- President
- Vice President/Secretary
- Treasurer

Committee Chairs:

- Fundraising
- Programs
- Membership
- First Cast
- Webmaster

Contact any current Board Member for additional information or description of positions. We welcome all members! MAKE A DIFFERENCE-VOLUNTEER!

INDIAN CREEK ROADS REOPEN IN THE RED RIVER GORGE

Two roads in the Indian Creek area of the Red River Gorge have been reopened recently. Forest Service roads 9A and 9B have been closed to vehicle access since last winter because of flooding damage. The roads provide access to Indian Creek and the East Fork of Indian Creek. Go fishing!



Chris Shaughnessy
Editor
500 Bohicket Road
Wilmore, KY 40390

NEXT MEETING

Tuesday, June 6, 2006, The Chop House,
2640 Richmond Road, Lexington, Kentucky,
6:30 p.m.

**Program: Chris Scalley – Georgia Trout
Fishing**

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