

## Southern Trout Water

Before last May if any of you were to ask me where my favorite fishing spot for Rainbow Trout is, instead of using the cliched response, "I could tell you but then I'd have to kill you," I would have replied Roaring River State Park in Missouri. After my last adventure on the Chattahoochee River however, I'm not so sure. Right smack through the middle of Atlanta, Georgia flows the Chattahoochee River. Normally you wouldn't expect to find Rainbow Trout in the middle of Atlanta except perhaps at the Georgia Aquarium, but the cold-water discharge from the dam on Lake Lanier allows both Rainbow and Brown Trout to thrive in the Chattahoochee.

My story begins at Outback Steakhouse with our archery coach Mr. George telling stories about fishing the Chattahoochee. We had traveled to Snellville near Atlanta for some much-needed coaching and Mr. George had just returned exhausted from multiple trips including international travel. When he had been able to be home lately, he had to pack all his possessions and move from his old house to his new one. So, over a platter of baby back ribs one fishing story led to another and it was decided that the next morning would be a good time to take a break and go fishing. We talked until 11:00 pm and right about the time the Outback employees were ready to throw us out, we left to go dig his Tracker 170 out of storage in his new garage. There were just a few hurdles. This would be the first time the boat had run in a long time and the fishing tackle had to be hunted down among boxes stored in his garage after his recent move.

By 11:30 pm we made it to his house and after extracting the boat, locating and preparing the tackle, and acquiring fishing licenses online we retired to our hotel for a good three or four hours of sleep with plans to meet back at Mr. George's about 6:00 am. After we left, Mr. George decided to try the ignition switch on the boat before going to bed. Although the battery charger

showed the cranking battery to be fully charged, the boat's entire electrical system was dead. He was now experiencing some of my family's long history of boat voodoo. He worked on the boat while frantically texting his friends, most of them archery celebrities and industry leaders, to ask them why his boat wouldn't crank. Their salty responses varied from "Coffey First!" to "Unprintable due to explicit content!" He gave up at 2:00 am and went to bed.

At 5:30 am the next morning we got up and swung by Hardy's for a fast food breakfast on the way to Mr. George's house. When we got there, about 5:50 am, he still hadn't received any valuable solutions and was fighting the voodoo as he proceeded to check all the fuses. Still nothing. My dad suggested that we swap batteries. We switched the trolling motor battery with the cranking battery. Mr. George again inserted the key, but this time beautiful golden light emanated from the console and a choir of 4-stroke pistons started to sing as the 40-horsepower jet drive finally cranked. Exorcism of the voodoo had occurred! During its long hibernation the main battery had lost its will to live and the battery charger had learned to lie like a Louisiana politician! After stopping at the Quik-Trip for some much-needed fresh non-ethanol gas, we finally headed to the boat launch!

Mr. George backed the boat into the water. The motor cranked again and ran great - much to our relief! After a several mile trip upstream during which I silently cursed myself for not bringing a jacket, we arrived at the sacred trout hole where Mr. George had fished for years. The fishing was slow until we switched to gold Cleo spoons. Then the magic began! We caught several small Rainbows and my brother William caught a 14-inch Brown, a personal and boat best! As the day wore on and we continued to drift back to the boat ramp the trout got bigger. We later figured out that the lack of a trolling motor battery had helped us greatly because instead of pounding any one spot we drifted steadily and covered several miles of river. Along

with the trout we caught several Largemouth and Bluegill where a small creek fed into the Chattahoochee. After five and a half hours of fishing we drifted back to the boat launch. Starved and exhausted we managed to trailer the boat back to Mr. George's house, went to First Watch for brunch and then on to the archery shop. Dosed on caffeine and adrenaline, we shot several hundred arrows and then went back to our hotel for a long night's sleep with nothing to do the next day but compete in a 72 arrow Georgia Archery Association Tournament!

Looking back at the insanity, I wonder what possessed us to stay up half the night working on a boat when we were all already exhausted and on the day before an intense state archery shoot. Maybe we weren't thinking straight then, but after catching and releasing almost fifty fish it all seemed worth it. I am by no means the best fisherman around and perhaps my favorite fishing hole will always be our pond in Louisiana, but I do love to catch fish when they are biting. It is a great feeling to get away from the daily grind and experience the sights, sounds, and smells of a new fishing hole – especially with friends and family. As strange as it may seem the smell of trout takes me back to being a little boy catching fish with my grandfather at Roaring River State Park. I guess that is why I do it – maybe that's why we all do it!