

# Welcome to the Toccoa Bend Fishing Community

Compiled by Bob Borgwat (08-26-09)



*Trout fishing in Toccoa Bend is accentuated by the presence of trophy-sized rainbow trout. But it's no accident that your neighbor, Brian Stanford, caught that fish. The Toccoa Bend Fishing Community has long protected the remarkable trout fishery that provides added value to the quality of life in Toccoa Bend. Photo by Carl Riggs.*

As informal a group as we are, the so-called Toccoa Bend Fishing Community is a group of responsible neighbors who take particularly strong interest in the trout fishing and the quality of the trout fishery of the Toccoa River where it wraps itself around the Toccoa Bend subdivision.

The primary focus of the TBFC is protection of the trout fishery in Toccoa Bend that has been in continual development for 12 years. Way back in 1997, a small group of your neighbors who are also dedicated trout fishermen and river watch-keepers stocked the river under state permit within the boundaries of the subdivision in hopes for building the trout population well beyond what Mother Nature may accomplish through limited productive spawning of the native fish. Back then, as it is today, the Toccoa River also was stocked at the Rock Creek Road bridge by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources working in conjunction with the federal trout hatchery located about 5 miles south of Toccoa Bend on Rock Creek Road. The common size of state-stocked trout is 9 to 12 inches.

State and federal trout stockings aside (many of these fish find their way into our waters), the active neighbors who comprise the Toccoa Bend Fishing Community have voluntarily funded the stocking of the

Toccoa River in Toccoa Bend twice a year since the initial stocking in '97. We invite non-active members of the Toccoa Bend community to join this effort. Our collective intent continues under state permit and includes improving fish numbers and protection of the fishery; but, of course, we want to enjoy the fishing too! That's why our group has informally worked out trespass rights with the riverside property owners in Toccoa Bend in exchange for our stocking dollars and our continual vigilance for the security of their properties. The result is a strong and enviable privately accessed trophy-trout fishery that is protected from outside trespassers, poaching and unauthorized fishing.

What a joy and privilege it is to fish for trout in Toccoa Bend! The drought years of 2006 and 2007 impacted the success of our stockings, but we had great carryover from the 2008 stocking. In 2009 rainbow trout are abundant in the river and average in length well more than they do in most trout fishing waters in Fannin County and, indeed, the rest of the north Georgia mountains. Rainbows in the 14- to 18-inch class are common. Individual fish easily top 5 pounds in weight, and our anglers even tie into 'bows that push upward of 10 pounds. It's a remarkable fishery that adds great value to the quality of life in Toccoa Bend.

## The TBFC Stocking Fund

The Toccoa Bend Fishing Community stocking fund is collected twice a year – in early March and again in early November – strictly by voluntary contributions. Those who do contribute are provided with ID cards (for them and their guests) that fulfill the state regulations that require people who hunt or fish on private property, other than the landowner and their immediate family, to hold written permission to hunt/fish on that property.

It is generally understood that only the contributors of the stocking fund informally hold general trespass rights for riverbank access on all riverside properties in Toccoa Bend. All other anglers, without specific invitation or permission from individual riverside property owners, are generally limited to fishing the riverway where it passes through common community property upstream from the riverside pavilion to lot #52 at the far-upstream end of the common property.



*Members of the informal Toccoa Bend Fishing Community stock the Toccoa River in Toccoa Bend in March 2009. Monies collected from voluntary donations pay for more than 700 pounds of rainbow trout purchased annually for stocking in the neighborhood. Photo by Carl Riggs.*

For sure, private property need not be “posted” as such. Indeed, it is the hunter or the fisherman’s responsibility to know they are on private land and that they must hold written permission to hunt or fish on that land. It is this law that the TBFC adheres to and upholds as a means for restricting passing boaters from actively fishing while passing through Toccoa Bend. The TBFC also uses this law as a means for requesting anglers who do not participate in the TBFC stocking fund to restrain from fishing on the private properties of Toccoa Bend. This law further serves our community in its application for removing and prosecuting trespassers for trespass violations. With many years behind us – and a few confrontations with trespassers and discussions with county/state/federal law-enforcement agents – the TBFC has confirmed its role is legitimate in protecting the private-property rights of the property owners in Toccoa Bend and of the property owners immediately across the river along the Toccoa Bend boundary. We need not be the property owner to confront individuals who are found fishing in Toccoa Bend or other private property adjacent to the subdivision. However, we approach all anglers with courtesy and under the assumption that they know they are fishing on private property and that they hold written permission to do so.

### **Toccoa Bend Fishing Friends**

Some of your neighbors in Toccoa Bend have a “burning fever” for the trout- fishing opportunities enjoyed both inside and outside the waters of the neighborhood.

For more information about trout fishing inside and outside Toccoa Bend, or for more information about the Toccoa Bend Fishing Community Stocking Fund, contact the following neighbors:

- Bob Borgwat ... 706-838-5259
- Carl Riggs ... 706-838-4110
- Brian Stanford ... 706-838-5299
- Rick Thompson ... 706-838-0274
- Ken Lawrence ... 706-838-4981

Furthermore, the activities of boaters who float the Toccoa River through Toccoa Bend can be restricted to include fishing while passing through our private property and the private property of those who own riverside land across from Toccoa Bend. For more information about this ruling and opinion of the Forest Service's attorneys and the USDA Office of General Council, please go to <http://www.fs.fed.us/conf/rec/toccoa-rvr-notice.htm>. If you suspect trespassing and/or fish poaching is taking place in Toccoa Bend, please use care in confronting the individual(s). Ask them courteously for their Toccoa Bend ID card and the name of the property owner who granted permission to fish. You can also contact one of the neighbors shown in the gray box above; or immediately call the Law Enforcement Division of the GDNR at 706-624-1367.

### **Trout fishing in Toccoa Bend**

While fishing on the common property of Toccoa Bend is encouraged and open to all property owners who are up to date on their annual dues, the extended fishery along our private properties complete more than 1½ miles of fishing access in Toccoa Bend. Signs are frequently displayed that declare private property boundaries and restrictions to fishing by passing boaters, so everyone should know their whereabouts on the riverway. Fishing licenses and trout permits are required for fishing the private waters of Toccoa Bend.

Both rainbow trout and brown trout live in the Toccoa River. Both species are stocked in the Toccoa River at the Rock Creek Road bridge by state and federal fisheries agencies. Brown trout generally are stocked only as fingerlings – about 3 to 4 inches in length; rainbows are commonly stocked in sizes ranging from 9 to 12 inches. Larger – sometimes much larger – individual rainbow trout are stocked on occasion by the agencies, but these are relatively few compared to the more numerous small rainbows. State and federal stocking of the river is accomplished by the Chattahoochee National Forest National Hatchery on nearby Rock Creek. Please visit its website at <http://www.fws.gov/southeast/ChattahoocheeForest/>



*Wintertime is a key period for fly-fishing in Toccoa Bend, displayed here by TPHA president Bob Borgwat, and is strongly encouraged by the Toccoa Bend Fishing Community to help protect this remarkable fishery. Photo courtesy of Bob Borgwat.*

Trout are a fish that associate themselves with currents. Unlike fish in a lake that tend to cruise the water in search of food, trout in a river or stream take station alongside and within currents and pools to take advantage of the foods – aquatic and terrestrial insects, and baitfishes – that are carried to them by the currents. That's one reason fly-fishing techniques are so successful in trout fishing. There simply is no better way to present “natural” prey/insects to a trout than to do so by fly-fishing with imitating fly patterns. Trout also readily take small spinners, spoons, jigs and other artificial baits that mimic the natural foods they eat.

Look for trout at the head of pools; in long troughs (or runs) deeper than the surrounding water; at the base of shoals; along undercut banks; at the edge of an eddy (where it meets the main current), and alongside, behind and even in front of logs, large rocks, boulders and other natural obstacles to the river’s flow. Warm water – 68 degrees and up -- will slow the bite, as will extremely cold water – 42 degrees and colder. The prime water temperature range is 48 to 62 degrees and occurs on the Toccoa River in Toccoa Bend from October through January and again from March through May. Look for fish in the well-oxygenated riffles and runs during the warmer periods and down in the deepest, slowest holes during the colder months.

Fly-fishing methods are best with 7½- to 9-foot 3-weight to 5-weight outfits. Spin-tackle anglers do best with ultra-light spinning tackle – 5-foot rods outfitted with small reels loaded with 4-pound test monofilament lines.

[Click here](#) for a photo gallery of the trout fishing in Toccoa Bend.

Trout fishing takes place year 'round in Toccoa Bend, but the TBFC appeals to our neighbors to curtail their trout fishing when the river's water temperature rises to 70 degrees and warmer (**please see the "Current Issues" page of the Toccoa Bend website for the latest river/fishing advisory**). State fisheries biologists confirm that trout "go off feed" when the water is 70 degrees or warmer to avoid spending more energy to feed than the energy they consume in the effort. Warm water also holds less dissolved oxygen ("air" to fish) than cold water. Rainbow trout need 4.5 parts per million of dissolved oxygen to survive, and 6.5 parts per million of dissolved oxygen to successfully reproduce. Brown trout, which are found in the Toccoa River in numbers much lower than rainbows, need DO levels slightly lower than rainbows to survive and reproduce.

### Trout fishing outside Toccoa Bend

The Toccoa River is Georgia's longest cold-water river and is open for trout fishing year 'round. From the tiny branches and spring creeks where it rises east of Toccoa Bend in Union County to its eventual renaming as the Ocoee River at the Georgia-Tennessee boundary in McCayesville, the river flows for nearly 50 miles. Many more miles of the Toccoa River's trout water are found upstream from Lake Blue Ridge than downstream from the reservoir's dam, and there are benefits for trout fishing in both sections.

Public sections of the upper Toccoa River are stocked heavily with rainbow trout from mid-March through early summer. Stocking sites are located along Georgia Highway 60, Doublehead Gap Road, Old Dial Road and Aska Road. Additional trout stockings are made in several tributaries to the upper river including Coopers Creek, Rock Creek and Big Creek, as well as in Rock Creek Lake, located about a mile upstream from the hatchery. Fishing regulations allow all legal methods of fishing along the length of the river and these tributaries, with an 8-fish daily possession limit of trout, all species combined. For a complete list of stocked trout waters, go to:

<http://georgiawildlife.dnr.state.ga.us/content/displaycontent.asp?txtDocument=34&txtPage=2>

However, fishing regulations change from November 1 until May 15 along a mile-long section of the Toccoa River downstream from the Sandy Bottoms canoe access (for a map of this area, go to:

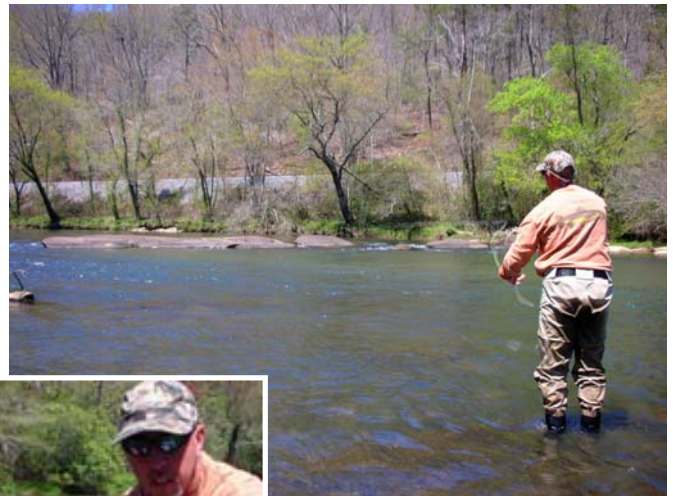
<http://georgiawildlife.dnr.state.ga.us/Assets/Documents/fisheries/toccoaDH.pdf> ). During this period, this section of the river is classified under the state's "delayed harvest" fishing regulations

(for more information, go to

[http://georgiawildlife.dnr.state.ga.us/Assets/Documents/fisheries/DH\\_infosheet.pdf](http://georgiawildlife.dnr.state.ga.us/Assets/Documents/fisheries/DH_infosheet.pdf) ). These regulations impose catch-and-

release fishing only with single-hook artificial lures and flies. All trout caught in this area during this period must be immediately released unharmed. Fishing licenses and trout permits are required for all Georgia trout waters. These can be purchased locally at Coopers Creek Store and Dixie Depot, both located nearby Toccoa Bend on Highway 60.

The upper Toccoa River watershed also is blessed with numerous small streams that hold wild rainbow, brown and brook trout. These Georgia gems are pristine, remotely located environments that see little fishing pressure. Most anglers who venture on foot into the gorges and above the waterfalls do so with fly rods in hand. Many of these destinations go un-named in the fly-fishing community in efforts to limit fishing pressure that might otherwise befall these valuable headwater trout streams. Find one on a map, locate the closest road, then hit the trail for what can be some of the most memorable trout fishing you'll ever enjoy.



*Toccoa Bend resident fly-fisherman Pat Reardigan wades the "Boulder Garden" on the lower Toccoa River during an early spring outing. The Toccoa spills out of Blue Ridge Dam and provides more than 14 miles of quality trout fishing for both wading anglers and those who float the river in driftboats.*

*Photo by Bob Borgwat*

The lower Toccoa River – those 14 miles of water downstream from Blue Ridge Dam – is among the most productive trout-fishing water in Georgia. Public access sites are located at the dam, Tammen Park in Blue Ridge, the Curtis Switch Road bridge crossing near Mineral Bluff, and Horseshoe Bend Park in McCayesville. The river is very popular with fly-

fishermen who both wade-fish and float the river in driftboats, canoes and kayaks to access lightly fished areas flanked by private property. Rainbows and browns are successfully spawning in the lower Toccoa; but rainbow, brown and brook trout are stocked in the river by state and federal fisheries agencies. All legal fishing methods are allowed in the lower Toccoa River year 'round. Daily possession limit is 8 fish, all species combined.

### **A trout released can be enjoyed again**

Fishing by all legal methods certainly applies to the waters of the Toccoa River inside Toccoa Bend. However, the TBFC encourages its neighbors and their guests to under the widely accepted catch-and-release ethic, using fly-fishing methods or fishing only with single-hook artificial lures. Fishing under these responsible restrictions reduces the physical damage to a hooked fish and reduces the possibility that the fish will die when released. A trout that eats natural or processed baits is likely to swallow the bait into its throat or stomach before getting hooked. Careful handling of a hooked trout is also critical to its survival upon release.

Here are a few guidelines you can use to help the next trout you catch survive, grow and provide for other anglers the same thrill you enjoyed when you caught it.

### **Trout-fishing techniques**

- Barbless hooks on both fly-fishing tackle and lures are recommended as they are easier to remove and therefore reduce handling time.
- The use of live/organic bait should be discouraged as it increases the likelihood of deep hooking.
- The use of artificial lures should be encouraged.
- Fishing line used should be appropriate to the size of trout being sought. This will prevent line breaking and reduce playing time.
- Avoid angling during extreme water temperatures, both hot and cold, if you plan on releasing your catch.

### **Landing a trout**

- Trout should be retrieved as quickly as possible to prevent fish exhaustion.
- Trout should be landed by hand where possible.
- Where a landing net is required, it should be knotless and preferably made of soft rubber.
- When landing extremely large trout (3 pounds or larger), the use of landing net should be considered.

### **Handling and photographing a trout**

- Keep trout in the water as much as possible to minimize air exposure.
- Never place your fingers through gills or in the eyes.
- Don't hold heavy trout by the jaw as this may damage the jaw and vertebrae.
- Hold large trout horizontally and support its body to avoid damage to the internal organs.
- Use wet hands or wet cloth gloves to handle the trout.
- Have camera ready prior to landing the trout to minimize air exposure.
- If possible, photograph the trout while in water.

### **Unhooking a trout**

- Have long-nose pliers or forceps available to back the hook out.
- Remove the hook quickly, keeping the trout underwater.
- If the trout is deeply hooked, cut the line and release the trout as quickly as possible.
- Avoid using stainless-steel hooks, as they take longer to corrode if left in the trout.

### **Reviving a trout**

- If there is current, hold the trout upright, facing into the current.
- If there isn't any current, gently move trout back and forth in the water until gill movements return to normal and it is able to maintain its balance.
- When the trout begins to struggle, let it swim away.