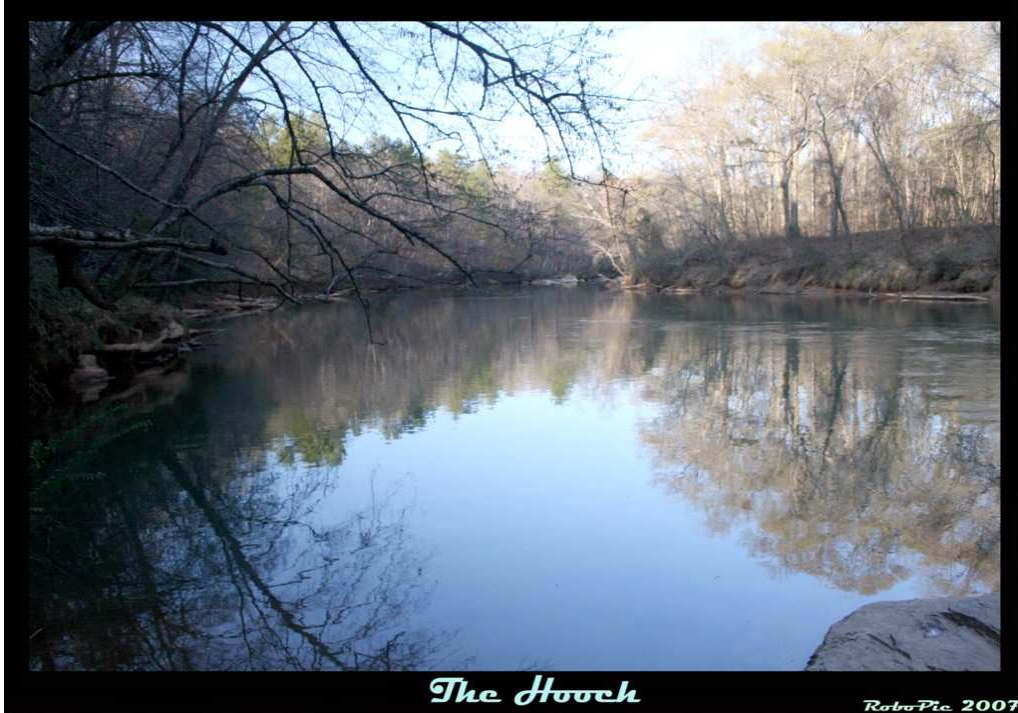


Trout Fishing the Hooch

By Mike Ault, copyright 2007

The Chattahoochee River, or the Hooch as it is called locally, winds through Georgia helping to form Lake Lanier and passing by several of Georgia's major cities such as Atlanta. In many places the native trout population is all but non-existent and if it wasn't for frequent stocking of trout I venture a guess that there would be few for local fly fishermen to enjoy.



The Hooch

RoboPic. 2007

I began fly fishing when my Grandfather gave me a Sears fly rod and reel combo back in 1968. I wish I could say I was an avid fly fisherman who had fished dutifully since then amassing a breath and depth of experience par excellence but I don't like to lie and have to admit I only recently started fly fishing again in 1996. Since I rejoined the ranks of fly fishermen (and fisherwomen) I have confined my efforts through necessity to the nearby areas of the Chattahoochee river, about 15 miles above Atlanta in the area of the river between Duluth and the Sandy Springs area. In the area of the river I fish you are encouraged to keep and eat your catch, in other areas it is catch and release. Normally the nearer you get to Atlanta the more it is catch and release and of course downstream from Atlanta and points south it is, unfortunately, almost a health requirement.



Fishing Spot

RoboPic 2007

The trout in this section of the Chattahoochee for the most part don't get much larger than 10-12 inches and rarely larger than a pound in weight, although I have seen some rare catches (usually on the wall of a fly fishing shop) that are quite spectacular. I feel good when I catch 4-5 nice size trout over the course of a mornings fishing. Usually I go out early and am home before noon, at which time I usually fry up the trout with a little butter, lemon and pepper and my wife, daughter and I enjoy a wonderful trout lunch.

In some of the catch and release areas I have heard tales from some fly fishermen of catching over a hundred trout in one days fishing. Now, whether these claims of such huge catches are valid or not I will leave to the reader, but as I said, I am usually happy to catch 4-5 over a course of 2-3 hours of fly fishing.

Fly fishing is a more active, but also more cerebral form of fishing than most bait fishing. As you move your arm smoothly through the numbers to place the fly exactly where you want the motions become almost automatic, allowing your mind to wander, it is almost a form a meditation. Of course any Zen state you may achieve is rapidly dissipated as soon as you get a hit on the fly and fight the fish back to you.

The Hooch in this area of Georgia is immediately below the Lake Lanier dam and subject to changes in depth of up to a foot or more if they begin letting down water from the lake. Several times I have waded out in my favorite spot (it requires going through a deep channel) and begun to fish, only to have to move back to less productive waters because the water (and current) started to rise.

Usually with trout on the Chattahoochee I have the best luck with copper johns, woolly buggers and hard body ants. I use a set of light weight Orvis waders with neoprene boots and Orvis felt soled rock boots over the top. I use a number 7 White River Hobbs Creek

three piece or an Orvis Clearwater number 6 fly rod with either a White River HC789 or Orvis Battenkill 7/8 reel. These combinations give me great flexibility depending on whether I am hiking down stream a long ways or just a wee walk down to the stream.



The Hooch has a very long trout season March 31, 2007 through October 31, 2007. For the most part the Hooch is lure only, no live bait or bait such as corn allowed at all with fishing allowed a half hour before sunrise to a half hour after sunset.

The largest problem in my area is the large number of poachers who fish with bait and at night, unfortunately most seem to be Hispanic, now I am not degrading these folks, it is just that all of the poachers I have come upon have been. The poachers will fish a spot until there are no trout left there then move on to the next spot. You find their leavings, usually a can with monofilament wrapped around it, a couple pieces of split shot and a hook and several empty cans that contained corn, at almost all fishing spots along the hooch.

The biggest threat to most poachers is the confiscation of their gear and vehicle. The poachers doing the most damage are usually in groups to three or four and are dropped off and picked up. If these poachers get caught they are usually just out an empty coke can and some basic fishing gear, no big loss. Perhaps deporting any illegal's among them would be a bit draconian but until the laws have something that means something to these fellows, the abuses will continue.

Anyway, I enjoy the few times a year I get out to fish the Hooch and even on days I don't catch a thing it is better than a day in the office...or cleaning out the garage!