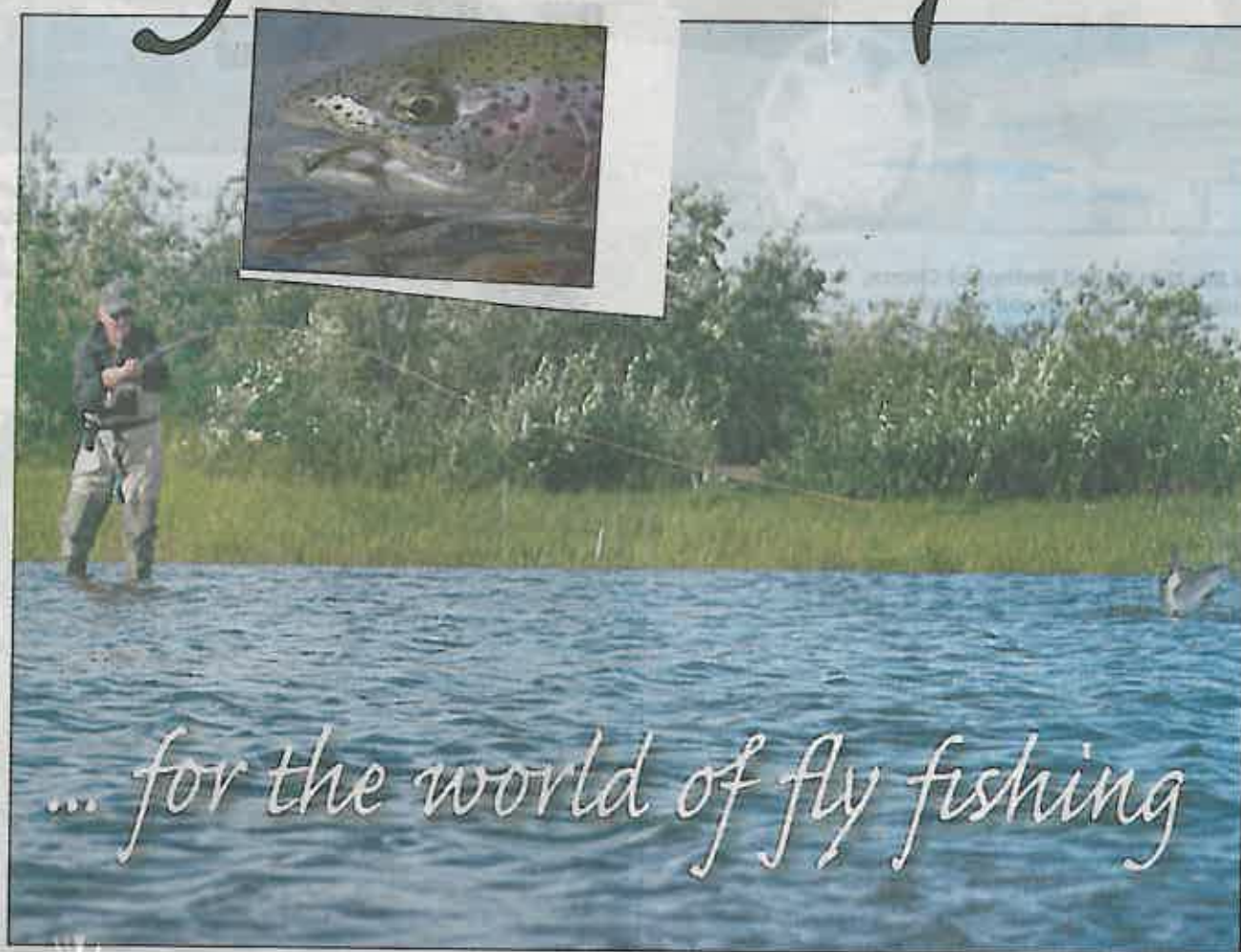


# Flying the coop ...



Tim Polter starts to pull in a fish during an excursion he and son, Matt, took last year in Alaska.

FOR THE JOURNAL

## Fly Fishing in the Upstate

The Andrew Pickens Ranger District in the northwest corner of the state is best known for the Chattooga Wild and Scenic River. In addition to floating the Chattooga, you can fish for Rainbow and Brown Trout and Redeye Bass. For Trout, you'll have the best success above highway 26 Bridge. For a real unique fishing experience, try fishing the Chattooga inside the Ellicott Rock Wilderness.



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No matter where Matt Polter decides to go fly fishing, he always brings a friend and camps out for days at a time, walking up and down the nearest water source all day, every day.

The Chauga Scenic River is also popular with anglers. Good access and parking are available adjacent to Cassidy Bridge on Highway 290. Trout can be caught in many of the smaller streams. Other species of choice include Largemouth Bass, Redeye Bass, Bluegill, Catfish, usually found in the warmer waters of both rivers.

Presbyterian Lake is a 4-acre pond managed for Largemouth Bass, Bluegill, and Shellcrackers. It is located on FS Road 2377, off the road to the Cedar Rifle Range.



BY JESSICA SIDLEY  
THE JOURNAL

CLEMSON — Living with four younger sisters took its toll on Matt Polter growing up.

He is, and always was, an easy going guy and older brother, but he simply couldn't relate to playing house and drinking imaginary tea.

His father picked up on this, as he too grew up with sisters who would have rather eaten dirt than spend time in the woods or in an area streams.

When Polter turned 10 years old, his father introduced him to fishing while they lived in Colorado.

"He bought me a wooden rod with a sterling silver reel," Polter said. "I was pretty certain he was the best dad in the world. I was so ready to learn everything about fishing from him. And to this day, it continues to keep our bond strong."

Polter and his dad Tim Polter would sneak away to local streams and lakes whenever they got the chance, tossing in a line before dinner or waking up early on the weekends.

After about two years, Tim thought it was time to introduce his son to the art of fly fishing.

"He was a very focused

young man," Tim said. "That's a weird age to get started with fly fishing because it can be very frustrating when you're just beginning."

He got his son all set up with the proper gear and pole, before taking him to an area on the Colorado River.

The water was rushing more intensely than the last time he had visited his favorite fly fishing spot, but it didn't concern him too much.

"I told Matt to stand about ankle deep on the shore, and start casting," Tim said. "We had practiced in the yard a lot before going out that day. His casting skills were really on point, and I felt like he was going to be a natural."

Basically, when fly fishing, one uses a lure shaped like fish's natural prey — for instance, an insect that has gotten caught in the current of a stream — in order to provoke the animal out of hiding. These lures are called "flies" and are attached to a hook or set of hooks. There's no bait involved, only carefully constructed simulations, Tim added.

Each cast comes on the heels of a flowing wrist



FOR THE JOURNAL

Matt Polter makes a point to fly fish at least once a month, in an area he's never fished before. "There are so many options here in the Southeast and all over the country. So far, I've fished more than 100 different spots. I hope to reach 1,000 in the next 10 years or so," he said.

snap, unlike a reel cast, where the bait or lure will sit beneath the water waiting for a bite.

Matt started casting out into the rapids and, in no time, had a bright rainbow trout on his line. When he looked back to yell to his father, he slipped on a rock and fell into the icy water.

"It was all slow motion," Tim said. "I saw him slip. Even though I was rushing up to help him, I didn't think he was in danger because I had told him to stay shallow."

It didn't matter. The cur-

rent was so powerful that Matt couldn't even stand up. Before he knew it, his struggle to get his footing brought him into deeper water.

"I remember thinking, 'OK, do not panic but you're being swept away by the Colorado River,'" Matt recalled. "Living just below the Rockies, news stories were always being reporting about lost hikers, stranded kayakers and people dying of hypothermia. Unless you know what you're doing and where you are, the area can be very dangerous."

Matt was now being carried down the river at a fast pace, dipping under water constantly.

Meanwhile, Tim was racing down the banks, trying to keep up with his son.

"I knew the river calmed down about 100 yards up, so I kept yelling to him to hold on," Tim said.

Even though Matt was dubbed a "fish" growing up — his love for swimming and the water was immense — Tim couldn't stand by any longer.

"That's when I jumped in and grabbed him," he said. "We floated together until we reached a fallen tree in the calm water. We climbed out and made it back to our campsite where we sat by the fire for hours. He was scared about what just happened to him, and I was scared of my wife. We both decided it was probably best not to go home just then," he joked.

All grown up now, Matt

## ON THE FLY: fishing

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lives outside of Cashiers, N.C. where he has a wife and a newborn son, Charlie.

"I've traveled all over to fly fish with my dad," he said. "It's been our thing since I was 10. Fly fishing in Montana and Colorado has been the best, but there are so many areas in South Carolina, North Carolina and Tennessee that

are amazing too. Thankfully, neither my dad or I have fallen in a river again."

For father and son, fly fishing is a favorite pastime that continues to make their bond tighter.

"Take your friends, take your family," Tim said. "There is nothing like learning to fly fish in the great outdoors, wherever that may be."

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