Jocassee trout have gone deep, but still biting

BY PHILLIP GENTRY
THE JOURNAL



COURTESY OF SAM JONES

Larry Burt from Texas recently had an outstanding day of trout fishing at Lake Jocassee with guide Sam Jones of Jocassee Charters.

By trolling a variety of spoons and live bait at depths approaching 90 feet, Jocassee Charters guide Sam Jones has been having one of the best summers of his career as a fishing guide at Lake Jocassee.

A combination of factors has spelled success for Jones this summer. First, rules that were put in place last summer are helping to reduce the by-catch mortality of stocked rainbow and brown trout in the lake. Another factor is that summer rainfall has kept the deep mountain lake at or near full pond.

"The lake and the trout are simply doing what they're supposed to be doing," Jones said. "Instead of guessing at what they might be doing because of low water or not enough fish, things are normal. And the way things are set up, normal up here is pretty darn good."

Since June 1, the size limits and catch-and-release rules governing trout in Jocassee were suspended, by design. The result is anglers can catch and keep three trout per angler without having to weed through short fish to catch a limit.

"About the smallest fish you'll catch this time of year is a 16-inch rainbow," Jones said, "and that's still a pretty good fish."

Earlier in the month, Jones guided Larry Burt from Texas on a weekday trip that netted the pair six outstanding fish — two trophy-sized browns and four rainbows up to 19 inches in length.

"Larry caught a 4.5- and a 6-pound brown," said Jones. "Both of those fish came off large shiners trolled out in front of the water intakes between 8 and 9 o'clock in the morning. Then we rounded out the two man limit over the rest of the morning with some really nice rainbows on a mixture of Sutton and Apex spoons."

Jones indicated that fish were holding in the tree tops near the intakes in about 90 feet of water. To tempt them, he runs six lines behind down riggers: two large 3-4 inch shiners, two Apex spoons and two Sutton Spoons.

"We lost an even better fish the other day because I vary the distance behind the ball from 30 to 60 feet and we had a big trout come out of the treetops in 90 feet and hit a spoon at 80," he said. "Before we could reel in the difference, the fish had us back into the trees and broke off. That is one problem during the summer, you're fishing right over the treetops and a good fish will sometimes grab the bait and head back down before you can stop him."

SATURDAY, AUGUST 17, 2013

IN OTHER NEWS

The camping ban at popular Eastatoe Creek Heritage Preserve in northern Pickens County remains in effect because of the risk of dead and dying hemlock trees on the property.

Recently, a group disregarded the camping ban and illegally camped on the preserve, and one of the campers was seriously injured by a falling tree.

"Because so many hemlock trees have died due to hemlock woolly adelgids, it's just too dangerous to let people camp in the preserve," said Mary Bunch, S.C. Department of Natural Resources (DNR) wildlife biologist and heritage preserve manager. "We hope visitors who use the preserve will respect the camping ban, because it is in place for their safety."

In addition to camping being closed on Eastatoe Creek Heritage Preserve, campfires are also prohibited due to the large number of dead trees. Large signs prominently placed in the preserve remind visitors that camping and campfires are not allowed there.

PHILLIP GENTRY can be reached by e-mail at pgentry6@bellsouth.net.