Local guide feels good about Jocassee

BY PHILLIP GENTRY
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With all of the area lakes reeling from recent inundations of rainfall from the last two weeks, even Lake Jocassee is up noticeably from what were nearly record lows over the winter.

According to Jocassee Charters guide Sam Jones, the lake's water levels are up to nearly full pond and the spring trout bite is on and getting better each day.

"The fishing has been on fire lately," said Jones, "and it's nice to see the lake up. We're only down about five feet below full pond where we were down nearly 25 feet a little over a month ago."

Jones said the typical spring pattern, like most everything else this spring, hasn't been typical. He and most of the local trout anglers have been fishing and catching trout in the area between Roundhouse Point and the mouth of the Toxaway River.

"We're trolling big water," he said. "That's normal this time of year as the trout always seem to move out of the rivers during the spring and move down around the dam. I just haven't had to go that far yet because I've been catching pretty good fish near the Toxaway."

Like most Jocassee trout anglers, Jones trolls a variety of artificial baits and live baits behind downriggers to target the lake's rainbow and brown trout.

The guide indicated that most of the rainbows were coming from 20-30 foot depths while the larger brown trout were holding in 30-40 feet of water. He also said it was a tossup to which baits were producing best on a given day.



COURTESY OF SAM JONES

Guide Sam Jones said rising water levels and the excellent trout fishing of late were the makings of a great trip on Lake Jocassee this spring.

"We had a little tournament last weekend and the guys trolling spoons caught the biggest fish and the live bait guys had little to show for their efforts," Jones said. "But during the past week, I've had more luck and caught bigger fish using live bait."

Normally, late spring is the time of year when Jocassee sees an influx of night fishing anglers who prefer to tie or anchor up near the dam and use lights to attract trout to their location. Jones said he hadn't heard much from the night anglers, but most of them were in for a surprise.

"Those guys used to tie up to the intake towers years ago, then Duke Power put a PVC barrier up that kept them off the tower but still within casting distance," he said. "After this last outage, they came out and put up a marker buoy and extended the barrier. Now you can't get within 200 yards of the intake area."

Another recent change that Jocassee anglers need to take note of is the decrease in the creel limit that went into effect last July. On Lake Jocassee, there is a three-fish combined total possession limit for all trout species.

From Oct. 1 through May 31, there is a 15-inch minimum size limit except only one of the three fish may be more than 20 inches long per person per day. From June 1 through Sept. 30, there is no length limit but it is unlawful to take, attempt to take or possess more than three trout.

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