



BACK TO THIEVING BASS EGG

Carping It Local

A Georgia backwater bash BY TY GOODWIN

THE SCRAPE OF RAW earth that passes for a parking lot here is often empty, which is odd, because this small reservoir is routinely noted as one of the best bass fisheries in Georgia, the sort of place where a six-pound largemouth is nice, but probably not the biggest caught that month, or even that week.

The few bass anglers who do frequent this water have come to regard me with a certain amount of caution. Disgust, even. Flyfishers in rural Georgia are often viewed with curiosity, although suspicion might be more accurate. Worse though, I'm that weirdo that catches carp, on purpose, and then releases them back to their business of thieving eggs from bass beds and mucking up the water with their pillaging. Any respect afforded carp is a kind of blasphemy here, and I'm considered a heathen of the worst sort. Lord knows I should be pitching these swamp rats far onto the bank like any normal 'Merican.

Not that it would matter. You could rain rotenone on this lake for a month and not make a dent in the biomass of carp. Most of the year, say April through October, much of the littoral rim of these three hundred acres carries a more or less permanent stain from the sediment kicked up by tailers. Tossing a few up onto the weeds is akin to killing off a hill of fire ants with a pair of tweezers.

Still, I stopped bringing friends here long ago. I got tired of the pouty looks that inevitably came when I mentioned five-weights.

"Really? I was thinking maybe an eight or a nine."

"Five is plenty. Carp here average about three pounds or so."
"Oh."

It's a surprise to some that not every carp on the planet is a broad shouldered twenty pounder. Too many dispatches coming out of Beaver Island and the Columbia, I guess. Breathless tales of spooled reels and splintered rods. Guys get the wrong idea.

Not that I'm opposed to big fish, per se, but the truth is I find the aggressive carp in Lake Michigan to be easier marks than the fish in this Georgia backwater. Those northern savages will run an olive Krazy Karper into the ground and hammer it without inspection. Their brethren here have a different attitude.

I prefer it, actually, this probability of losing. I also like the light rods—it's a deep-seated habit that probably comes from years of pitching Wulffs to wild trout in the Smokies. I like the easy to and fro, the casual casting, the effortless nature of it all. Throwing a 10-weight for a few hours, by contrast, can feel an awful lot like work. Pursuing difficult carp with a fly rod is work enough. Might as well enjoy the casting.

You might think that being proficient would tip the odds in your favor, but a five-carp day is a solid outing on this water, a ten-carp day inexplicable. Mostly, it's a long string of twos and threes with plenty of blanks in the mix. Plenty of blanks.

"Look," I tell my friends, "bring whatever rod you want. It probably won't matter much anyway."

TY GOODWIN'S work can be found in *The Fly Fish Journal*, *Eastern Fly Fishing* and *Southern Kayak Fishing*, among others. He lives in Chickamauga, Georgia, with his wife and two boys, who are only a little embarrassed by his carp obsession.