

CUTBANK THE BROOD X ULTIMATUM

Words and Photo:
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THE TEXTS READ like a missive from a Jason Bourne movie.

—*You're a UT guy, right? Go where the rivers come together.*

—*That could be anywhere. There are a million tribs up there.*

—*FB*

—*French Broad?*

—*Hush hush*

Fair enough. Max and I hadn't asked for specifics. That we received any information at all was generous. Brood X cicadas were emerging after 17 years of subterranean exile and the rumors coming out of Knoxville, TN, hinted that carp were on them in a big way. By most accounts, the expected enormity of this event had not materialized throughout most of eastern Tennessee, but at a few hot spots on certain rivers the emergence was reported to be in full swing, places where the giant bugs seemed to be dropping to the water from every overhanging branch. The local intel necessary to sniff out these isolated areas was proving hard to come by and we felt fortunate to get a nod in the right direction. Where the rivers come together. French Broad. Hush hush. Got it.

Brood X. Even the name of these insects smacked of intrigue, some mutant horror dreamed up in the underground laboratory of an evil scientist. The reality, of course, was nowhere near that nefarious. The 17-year life cycle of this particular batch of periodic cicadas was coming to an end. They were emerging from their underground lairs to molt, mate and die. Sometimes this happened next to a river and resident carp were quick to key in on the bonanza. Despite the best efforts of local anglers to keep a lid on these locations, details were leaking out slowly. The combination of rarified fishing and social media glory was proving to be too much for some. Clues were available if you knew where to look.



Confirmations could be had if you knew who to ask. The next day, in the hazy grayness of early morning, I found myself backing Max's skiff down a remote boat ramp on the French Broad River.

In our years of fishing together, Max and I have followed up on many rumors that turned out to be complete busts. But sometimes a rumor ends up being closely guarded truth that has somehow bubbled to the surface. Sometimes a rumor leads you to the evil scientist and you save the world. Sometimes a rumor takes you to a river full of carp and trees full of cicadas and a few hours of the wildest fishing of your life.

That evening, as we drove home with aching arms and a cupholder full of mangled foam cicada flies, I scrolled through our block of photos from the day.

"You gonna post any of these?" I asked Max. "Some nice fish in here."

"Nah," he says. "Better wait until this thing is over. Hush hush, remember?"

Fair enough. ☞

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The arrival of Brood X cicadas brought a brief period of carp fishing nirvana to a few east Tennessee rivers. The usually circumspect carp became reckless and greedy, often racing each other to the dinner bell of a big bug struggling on the surface. For a few days, catching a lot of carp on the fly, a dry fly no less, was doable—and even easy.