

Life & Leisure

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MELA QUEEN ■ 291-9433

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Fishing on the fly

Find paradise in Garrett streams

BY DYLAN JONES
The Dominion Post

Don Hershfeld carefully wades out into the swift water, keeping his eye fixed on his target. As he moves his arm back, then forward, 30 feet of neon-green line snakes through the air, landing exactly atop his prey. Sitting along the bank of a glassy pond waiting for a bass to bite can be relaxing, but the thrill of wading out into rushing water and masterfully casting and hooking a colorful rainbow trout can be a rewarding experience.

Just east of Morgantown, in the mountains of Garrett County, Md., flow four scenic rivers that are known for their world-class fly-fishing.

Hershfeld, owner and operator of Streams and Dreams Retreat in Oakland, Md., said he feels like he lives and works in paradise.

"Relaxing just comes naturally here," he said. "We have some of the best fly-fishing rivers east of the Mississippi right in our backyards."

Hershfeld, a senior aquatic ecologist for the Army Corps of Engineers before opening the bed and breakfast, is an experienced fly-fisher, teaches casting and offers guests wading and floating fishing trips.

His retreat features a natural trout stream and a casting pond, and is a minute's walk away from the scenic Youghiogheny River.

The Youghiogheny, locally known as the Yough (pronounced Yock), supports native brook trout, and is also stocked annually with rainbow and brown trout.

"I chose to locate here even though [the Yough] might not have the largest, wildest or easiest to catch fish, but in combination it offers a unique blend of those characteristics," Hershfeld said.

Jim Truman, a Morgantown musician and geologist, is an avid fly-fisher who praises the Yough.

"When you fish on the Yough, it approaches the feel of the bigger Western rivers," he said.

Fly fishing gets its name from the hand-tied, colorful lures made to resemble different stages of an insect's life cycle. The sport combines a pole, usually nine feet long, with a simple reeling mechanism to bring in the specialized line.

Fly line, a tough, braided core coated in a plastic sheath, is fashioned to sink or float, allowing the lure to act as a nymph, an emerger or a mature adult.

As a nymph, the insect lives on the bottom of rocky streams.

When it is ready to make the perilous journey up and past hungry trout to sprout wings, it's known as an emerger.

As an emerger, the trout get their first opportunity to scarf up a sizeable meal. When the insect reaches the surface, it sheds its skin in the surface film and becomes an adult. The trout are forced to leap out of the water, giving their position away.

Unlike spin-reel fishing, which uses the weight of the lure to cast the line to the desired spot, the weight of the fly line itself is used to cast the lure into the water. The line can be precision-cast without a lure on the end.

The lures, or flies, are as much works of art as they are functional tools. Intricately designed with string, feathers and animal fur, the materials are wrapped around a hook with the finished product closely resembling an insect.

The most common types of flies for mid-Atlantic streams are mayflies and caddisflies. Other flies mimic terrestrials, such as beetles and grasshoppers, and small baitfish.

Creative fly crafters make attractor flies, which are flies that combine characteristics that a trout would find enticing but don't actually represent an insect.

Hershfeld said attractor flies work well in streams that support trout but don't support insect hatches.

"In these streams, the trout are feeding opportunistically," Hershfeld said. "The trout will sample many things in the current, including anything that looks like a potential food source."

Even with a long line and a bright, good looking fly, you won't catch anything unless you know how to cast and

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TRY YOUR HAND
at fly-fishing. Find outfitters, Page 2-E.



Don Hershfeld (above) owns and operates Streams and Dreams Retreat in Oakland, Md.

Billy Wolfe/The Dominion Post

Eric J. Tomlinson/
The Dominion Post photo illustration

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how to read the stream.

Truman said the cast was difficult for him to learn.

"The hardest thing is to keep the angle stiff and straight," he said. "You've got to act as if your hand was a cemented extension of your arm."

Truman recommends going out with a guide as a beginner to eliminate practicing bad form, which can become a habit.

Hershfeld has been teaching beginners how to cast for years. He has developed a system that explains why you do specific motions, not just how to do them. He said that many instructors simply show a student how to cast and move on to something else.

"Many instructors feel constrained by the amount of material to be covered, so they only skim the surface on how to tie a knot, read the water, or cast," Hershfeld

said. "If they understand the why behind the how, then they're learning techniques that work, as well as why they work."

Hershfeld, who picked up fly fishing as a child, is self-taught.

"I made every error that was possible to make," Hershfeld said. "I was fortunate enough to later have a series of mentors."

After learning *how* to cast, you have to know where to cast. In streams and rivers with fast currents, trout feed in areas where insects and organic matter are concentrated into funneled areas called pockets.

"In pockets, food is concentrated," Hershfeld said. "Also, the water surface is broken, so the trout can't see the fisherman or the food source clearly."

Hershfeld said the Savage River is a good river for pockets. He said fishermen looking for a diversity of insects and an abundance of selectively feeding trout can do no better than the Savage River.

"The fish are well fed and can

afford to be fussy," Hershfeld said. "Fishing the glassy pools is a tremendous challenge, while covering the pockets can get you a lot of fish." Hershfeld said the Savage is one of the last mid-Atlantic rivers where native brook are doing fairly well. He said it also is stocked with beautiful brown trout.

The Casselman River, with brook, brown and rainbow trout, is a scenic river that flows through Amish country.

"The Casselman is very gentle, and easily accessed and waded," Hershfeld said. "It's good for beginners."

The north branch of the Potomac River is unique. It contains brook, brown and rainbow trout, and is one of two rivers east of the Mississippi that supports cutthroat trout.

"If you manage to catch all four in one day, it's an accomplishment," Hershfeld said.

For Truman, fly fishing brings him closer to nature. He said knowledge of the fish, rivers and

If you go

Outfitters

■ Bill's Outdoor Center, (301) 387-3474, billsoutdoorcenter.com

■ Deep Creek Lake Family Fishing Tours, (304) 735-3426, (301) 616-7407, deepcreeklakefamilyfishingtours.com

■ Fishing Deep Creek Lake, (304) 735-3426, fishingdeepcreeklake.com

■ Sang Run Outfitters, (301) 387-6726, sangrunoutfitters.com

■ Savage River Outfitters, (301) 359-8010,

savagriveroutfitters.com

■ Spring Creek Outfitters, (301) 334-4023, springcreekoutfitter.com

■ Streams & Dreams B&B, Vacation Cottage and Flyfishing Instruction, (301) 3TROUT1, streams-and-dreams.com

■ Wisp Resort, (301) 387-4911, wispresort.com

Directions to Deep Creek
Take Interstate 68 to Exit 4 at Friendsville. Take Md. 42 to U.S. 40 and follow U.S. 40 to the Deep Creek Lake, Md., main stretch.

insects makes him appreciate the finer details of nature.

"The intensity of the nature when you're fly fishing is incred-

ble," he said. "You study the water, the hatches, the fish — it really makes you appreciate and want to partake in preservation."