



BLUE RIDGE BOYS

UNPLUG AND FIND A NEW ENERGY

ARTICLE SUE G. COLLINS | PHOTOGRAPHY DAVID HULSEY

Bill Oyster of Blue Ridge hand makes bamboo fishing rods the way they've been made for hundreds of years. He adds his very personal touch, engraving story telling works of art on each heirloom.



FOR THE BETTER PART OF THREE HOURS STANDING IN THE MIDDLE OF THE GIN-CLEAR NOONTOTLA CREEK IN BLUE RIDGE, I WAS LASER FOCUSED ON A 2-INCH PIECE OF GREEN YARN.

I'd glance up occasionally for a new cast, looking for foam or those treasure troves of cold dark water. My guide David Hulsey was patient, then pushy when that green yarn indicator dipped ever so slightly. Six times over that morning, I won the battle with strong and willful trout, learning when to let the fish run and when to reel like hell. Hulsey leads trip along the two miles of water over 1,200 acres owned by Noontotla Creek Farms. Other members of his team teach and guide upland wingshooting and sporting clays.

This is not your mama's Blue Ridge, the cute little town where you have lunch on rainy North Georgia Mountain days.

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Head up, unplug and make plans to paddle, raft, hike, golf, fish, shoot, bike or really go deep and join a class at Oyster Bamboo Rods to craft your own fly rod. Waitlisted through next spring, the six-day workshops attract kings of industry and beginning sportsmen alike who are put through the paces of planning, shaping and finishing a bamboo rod using age-old techniques. Bill and Shannen Oyster have grown the business from their basement to the beautiful new brick building at the end of Main Street downtown Blue Ridge. Bill oozes authenticity, originality and raw artistic talent. Shannen shares soulful stories of their students who all experience a shift, grown men hugging their finished rod, eyes welling.

Blue Ridge can do that.

This spirit of entrepreneurship, community and fierce custodial love for the land is pure Blue Ridge.

BlueRidgeMountains.com

OysterBamboo.com

NCFGA.net

OldToccoaFarm.com


///01 The bamboo fly rod making workshops are booked through 2018, but stop in and watch the craftsman and get on the list for 2019.

///02 Upstairs from Oyster Bamboo Rods is their Cast & Blast Inn. Stay downtown Blue Ridge and you'll have a handy basecamp for Fannin County adventures.

///03 Noontootla Creek Farm fly fishing courses give students a mile of dedicated river. Photo David Hulsey

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