

LOCAL'S CHOICE

TAKE THE DAY

OFF

A DAY (OR TWO) IN BLUE RIDGE, GEORGIA

ARTICLE SUE G. COLLINS

PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF

VISIT BLUE RIDGE AND OYSTER BAMBOO RODS



Bill Oyster teaches shares his craft of making bamboo fly fishing rods with lucky students at his shop in Blue Ridge

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 trips along the two miles of water over 1,200 acres owned by Noontootla 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.

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 planing, shaping and finishing a bamboo rod true 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.



Bill Oyster takes the day off. Fly fishing in Blue Ridge is a feast for all senses this month.



Blue Ridge Brewery flight

BlueRidgeMountains.com

Classes, bespoke rods **OysterBamboo.com**

Fishing and shooting **NCFGA.net**

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