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Photo by King Montgomery



Photo by Beau Beasley



Photo by Beau Beasley

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Photo by Eric Evans.



Photo by Beau Bastky.



Photo by Beau Bastky.



Photo by Chris Neusome.



- Interstate
- U.S. Highway
- State Highway
- Other Roadway
- Boat Launch
- Fish Hatchery
- Campground



- 1** Constitution Park—Home of Virginia Fly Fishing Festival
- 2** Good Wading
- 3** Low water dam

South River



South River

South River is one of the most underrated fisheries in the Old Dominion. Winding first through farmland, the South River gathers steam from feeder creeks and eventually combines with North River to form the South Fork of the Shenandoah. It surprises most anglers to learn that South River was the first urban trout fishery in Virginia and home to the state's first Trout Unlimited chapter.

It should come as no surprise, however, that as an urban trout fishery the river runs right through the middle of downtown Waynesboro. South River has seen its share of abuse in years past. Locals recall the story of how the river actually caught fire one day! Waynesboro residents could tell what color dye the adjacent corduroy plant was using by looking at the color of the water. Happily, tougher environmental regulations marked the end of those days. Today concerned citizens and conservation groups like the Shenandoah Valley chapter of Trout Unlimited are working together to mitigate the effects on the river.

The variety of the fish in the South River is another welcome surprise: The VDGIF stocks the river with rainbows and browns a few times each year, and a healthy population of bass, bluegill, and even carp also call the water home. A delayed-harvest trout section exists in the river, between the Second Street Bridge



Captain Tommy Mattioli enjoys teaching children how to tie flies at the annual Virginia Fly Fishing Festival. Photo by Beau Beasley.



A view of the South River from the Wayne Avenue Bridge. Photo by Beau Beasley.



The South River, which runs through downtown Waynesboro, is one of Virginia's best-known urban trout streams. Photo by Beau Beasley.

upstream to the base of the Rife Loth Dam. Anglers may have to bushwhack their way through some heavy growth along the banks. The easiest section of the South River to access is in downtown Waynesboro's Constitution Park.

In 1999, local businesses dealt a new and very different hand to the South River. Members of the nonprofit Waynesboro Downtown Development Incorporated (WDDI) came up with an unusual plan to promote tourism in town: They decided to host a fly fishing festival. The annual Virginia Fly Fishing Festival is held each year on the banks of the South River in downtown Waynesboro.

Over the years the festival has grown into the largest fly fishing event in the state and each April draws thousands of anglers from as far away as Georgia. Half of all festival profits go to fund conservation work. In 2007 several large boulders were installed in the river to create structure and habitat for local trout. Recently festival organizers established a foundation to help promote the festival and its ongoing work to protect the rivers of Virginia. For more information on the festival foundation or the festival itself, check the resources section of this book or go to their Web site at www.vaflyfishingfestival.org.

Two local residents, Len Poulin and Dana Quillen, have worked tirelessly to promote the festival and the South River. These concerned citizens and committed conservationists deserve our special thanks and appreciation.

WDDI paved the way for a unique collaboration of commercial interests, local government, conservation organizations, and ordinary citizens, and the city and South River are reaping the dividends today.



Conservation grants from the Virginia Fly Fishing Festival Foundation helped pay for these stones, which are excellent structure for the local trout. Photo by Beau Beasley.

Types of Fish

Rainbows and browns make up most of the cold water fish here. The South River is also home to smallmouth bass, largemouth bass, bluegill, and carp.

Known Hatches

Winter Stonefly, Blue Quill, Hendrickson, March Brown, Little Yellow Stonefly, Sulfur, Quill Gordon, Caddis, Cahill, inchworm, and terrestrials. This river also has a wide variety of baitfish as well as crayfish.

Equipment to Use

Rods: 4-7 weight, 7-9 feet in length.

Reels: Palm drive.

Lines: Weight-forward floating lines matched to rod. Sink tips will help in some places.

Leaders: 3X-6X, 9 feet in length.

Wading: Hip boots or chest waders.

Flies to Use

Dries: Adams #14-20, BWO #14-20, Braided Butt Damsel #10-12, Dusty's Deviant #12-16, Elk Hair Caddis #14-20, Flying Ant #10-18, Gelsos's Little Black Stonefly #16-20, Lt. Cahill #14-20, Little Yellow Sally #14-20, March Brown #10-14, Murray's Mr. Rapidan #14-20, Pale Morning Dun #14-20, Quill Gordon #12-22, Stimulator #12-20, Steeves' Attract Ant #16-20, Steeves' Bark Beetle #16-20, Steeves' Crystal Butt Cricket #8-10, Steeves' Disc O' Beetle #14, Steeves' UFO #10. *Nymphs & Streamers:* Beadhead Goldilox #6-10, Beadhead Hare's Ear #14-20, Beadhead Prince Nymph #14-20, Bruce's Little Bow #6, Coburn's Cress Bug #14-20, Coburn's Inchworm #12-14, Egg #6-20, Finn's Golden Retriever #6-10, Green Weenie #14-16, Matuka #4-10, Mickey Finn #6-10, MC2 Crayfish #4-6, Muddler Minnow #6-10, Murray's Marauder #6-10, Pheasant Tail #14-20, River Witch #6, Scud #10-18, Sculpin #4-8, Woolly Bugger #6-10.

When to Fish

The South River fishes best from April to mid-June and late September to mid-November.

Season & Limits

There is a delayed-harvest area that runs from the Second St. Bridge up 2.4 miles to the Rife Loth Dam. From October through May, anglers may use only artificial lures and must release all fish. From June through September, general trout regulations are in effect.

Nearby Fly Fishing

St. Mary's River, Mossy Creek, and several streams in the Shenandoah National Park.

Accommodations & Services

Waynesboro has all the dining, lodging, and services you need. I have enjoyed staying at the Iris Inn and the Belle Hearth, two excellent B&Bs. The closest fly shops with guide service are Albemarle Angler in Charlottesville and Mossy Creek Fly Fishing in Harrisonburg. You can also get the local lowdown from Dominion Outdoors in Fishersville.

Rating

No one will confuse the South River with a pristine stream in the Shenandoah National Park. Nevertheless, fishing the South has its benefits. It's easy to reach, full of a variety of fish, and home to the Virginia Fly Fishing Festival. These reasons earn it a 7.