

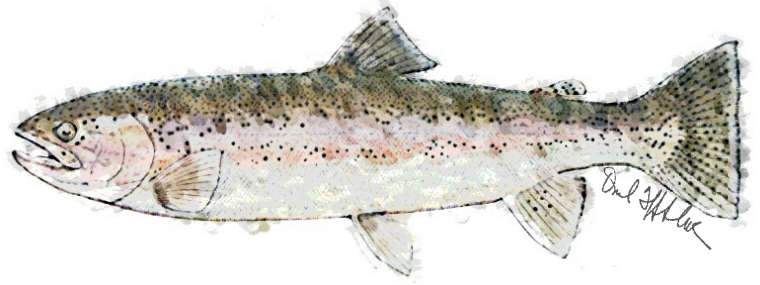
# Dangerous Waters

by Dave Teffeteller

The other evening Scott McBride and I were fishing the Toccoa tailwater and witnessed a young man berated his pre-teen son to “just wade out here the water won't kill you!”

Fortunately, the small boy had better sense than his father and stayed near the bank in less than knee deep water. The truth is, the water can kill you! The Toccoa, particularly the section between the Blue Ridge dam and Tannen Park and the Highway 515 Bridge has the potential to be the most dangerous water in the area.

When TVA releases into the Toccoa from Lake Blue Ridge the water rises over 4 feet in a matter of moments and the temperature of that water from the bottom of the lake is in the 40s. The dangers of drowning and hyperthermia are real. There are no warning bells, sirens or whistles only the sudden rush of water from the dam's release gate. The good news, TVA does publish a release schedule; the bad news, it is not always accurate. Nevertheless, always check the release information before getting on the river. The information is available by phone at 800 238-2264, then dial 4, 23 and #; and online at [www.tva.gov/river/](http://www.tva.gov/river/) from the reservoir menu select “Blue Ridge” and from the type of information menu select “Releases and Elevations.”



**The Toccoa Tailwater holds a healthy population of trout, but anglers should exercise caution when wading its waters.**

If you are downstream and do not see or hear the change in water as it is switched from the minimum flow gate to the release gate, the increased flow may not be noticeable until it is too late to exit the stream. But by being aware of your surroundings you can improve your chances of getting out safely. Always choose a “gauge rock” near you when wading. If the water level moves up on that rock, get out! If you see more debris (leaves and grass) in the water, get out! If the sound of nearby shoals increases, get out!

Any time you are wading the Toccoa, or any other river for that matter, it's always a good idea to take along a reliable wading staff. Invest in a good staff. One that doubles up or breaks from the full force of your body weight and that of the water is of no value and will only give you a false sense of security. Many outfitters offer life vests for wading fisherman. Some even double as fishing vests. If you are wearing waders, always wear a wading belt.

Boaters and float tubers should also be aware of the releases. An unanticipated increase in flow will not only get you to your take-out a lot quicker, it can also present some unnecessary perils.

In writing my flyfishing guides, I have always cautioned anglers to use common sense when wading. After witnessing the young fellow and his son the other night, I was reminded that common sense is sometimes in short supply. So, if you realize that the water is rising and you see nearby anglers, give a loud yell to them that the water is coming up you might just be saving their lives.

Dave Teffeteller is a Gilmer County resident, fisherman, artist, and the author of *Southern Appalachian Fly Fishing Guides* and *Dave Teffeteller's Fly Fishing Guides*.

---

## Toccoa River TVA Release Information



- Dial 800 238-2264
- Then dial 4, 23 and #



- Go to [www.tva.gov/river/](http://www.tva.gov/river/)
  - From the reservoir menu select “Blue Ridge”
  - From the type of information menu select “Releases and Elevations”
-