

OUTDOORS

FISHING

A sure thing

Callaway Gardens battles drought by bringing in shipment of trout each year

BY BRYAN BRASHER

Special to the Ledger-Enquirer

Fishing operations manager Carl Warmouth is the first to admit it was a long, hard summer at Callaway Gardens.

Rainfall was virtually nonexistent, and many of the small lakes that decorate the landscape at Callaway stayed far below full pool for months.

Fishermen were scarce at times, and the fishing was often tough.

But no matter tough it got, Warmouth always knew relief was coming.

Relief in the form of big beautiful rainbow trout.

Each fall when the water temperatures dip into the low 60s, Callaway receives a big shipment of trout for stocking into the private lakes.

This year's shipment arrived late last month — and they were as welcomed as they've ever been.

"The drought has been really hard on everyone in the fishing industry," Warmouth said. "A lot of people really lost confidence in fishing because all of the lakes in the area were so far below full pool. A lot of people just quit fishing.

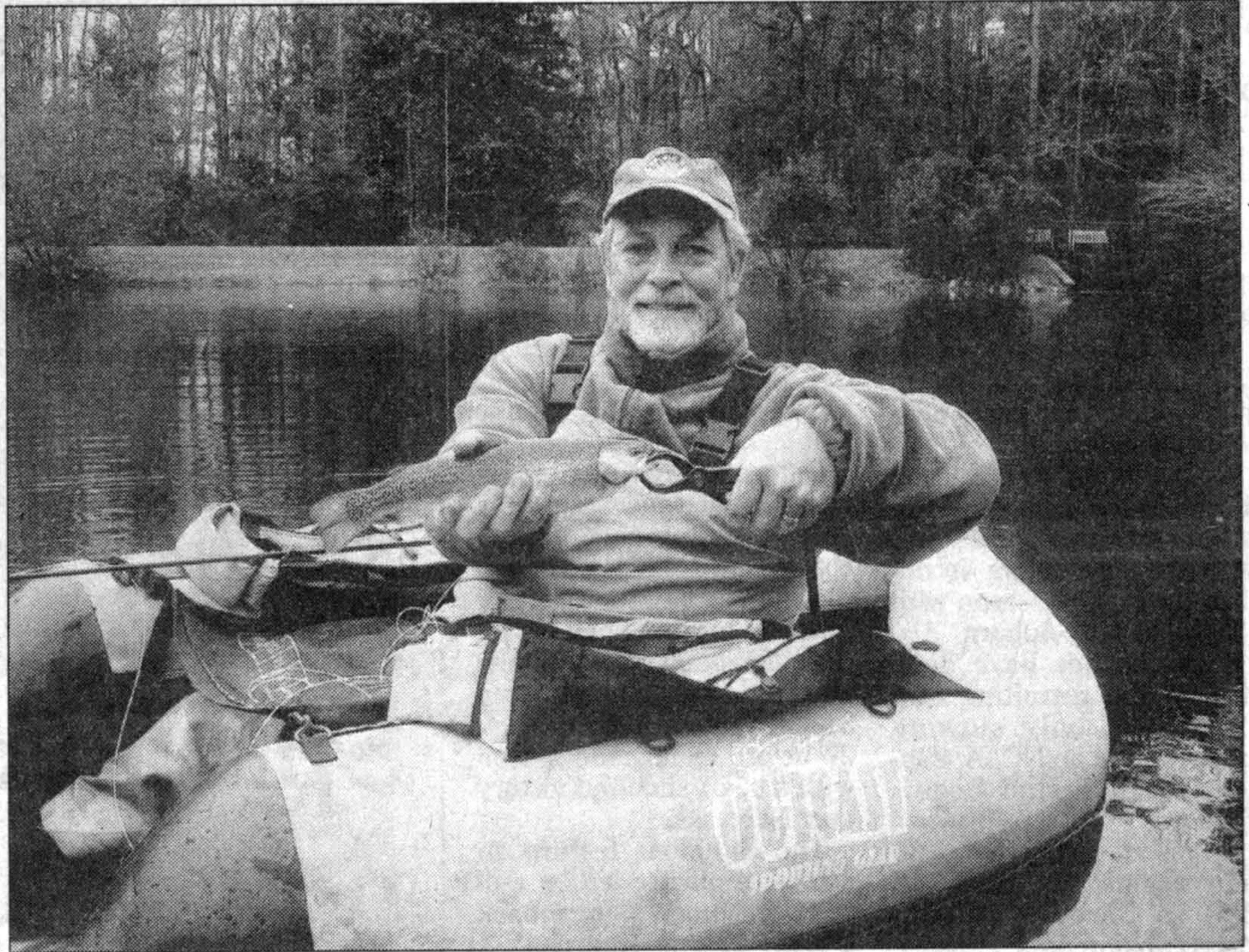
"But these trout — they're always a sure thing."

In years past, Callaway has received a good mix of rainbows, browns and even a few golden trout. But this year's shipment was limited to only rainbows because of the drought.

The northern coldwater hatcheries where trout are raised were heavily affected by lack of spring and summer rainfall. As a result, the big brown trout that have often been the highlight of the Callaway shipments were not available.

Warmouth went instead with a gigantic shipment of rainbows. The majority of this year's Callaway trout measure from 15-17 inches with lots of trophy trout in the 5- to 10-pound range thrown in.

"We're really excited about the quality of the rainbows we have this year," Warmouth said. "For most trout



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In above photo, Bo Stanford of Fairhope, Ala., caught this rainbow trout while fishing from a float tube recently at Callaway Gardens. The fishing was also good for Dennis Campbell, below, of Atlanta, who shows off a big rainbow trout he caught.

fishermen, it's awfully hard to beat a 10-pound rainbow. That's the ultimate for a lot of people — and we've got them."

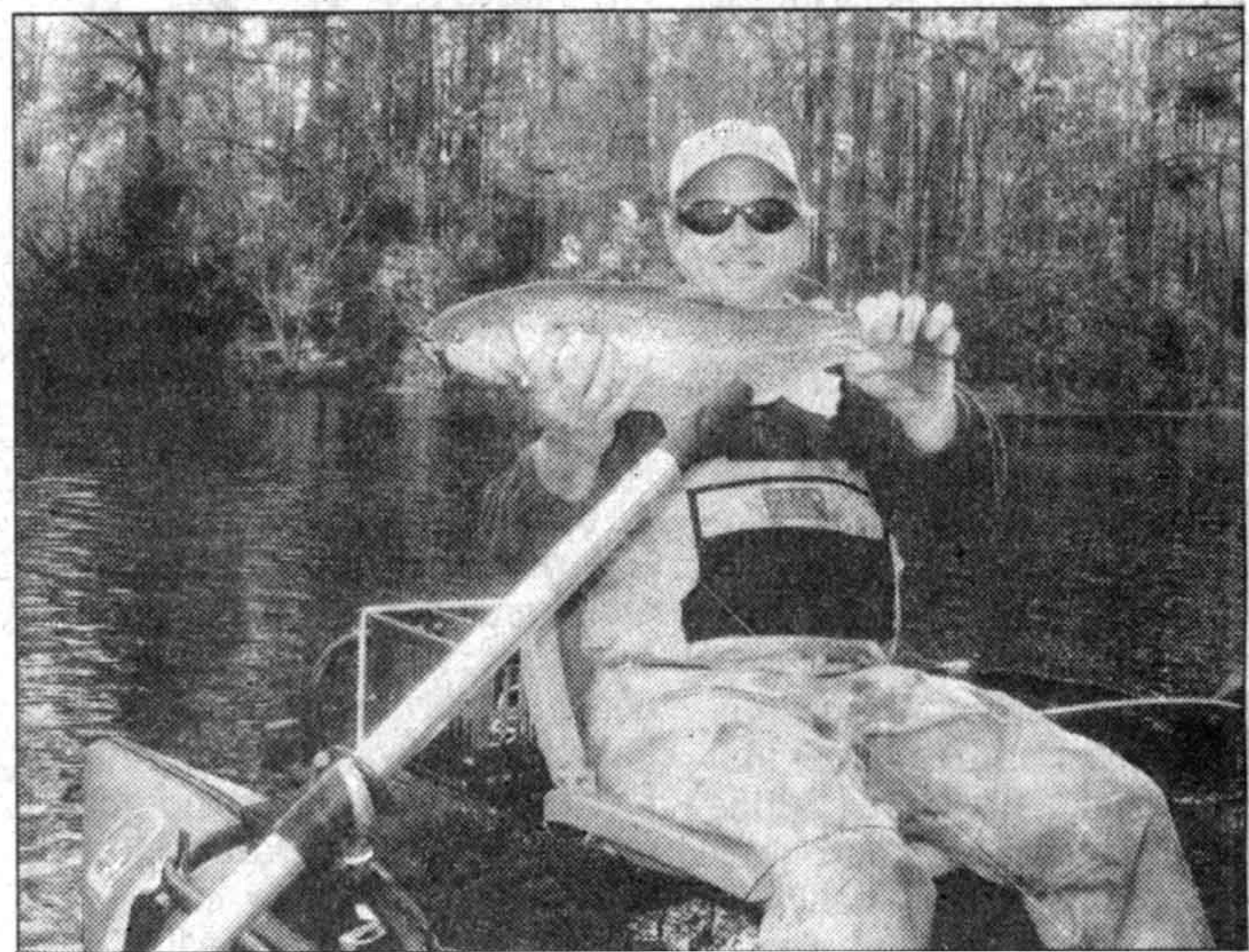
Warmouth ordered this year's shipment from a hatchery in North Carolina — the only facility that could meet his needs.

"The other hatcheries only had 10-12 inchers," he said.

Warmouth believes this year's trout will be tougher than most because they've already survived the long, hot summer at the hatchery.

During their first couple of weeks at Callaway, they've also been plenty hungry. Numerous fish in the 5- to 6-pound range have already been caught, and Warmouth says there are times when the fish will bite virtually any lure a fly fishermen chooses to use.

"The trout from this particular hatchery bite better than any of the others we have gotten in the past," Warmouth said. "I wouldn't believe that, except I've seen it firsthand.



"I talked to the hatchery owner about it, and he said it's because their trout are not stressed as much as trout from other places. They're handled less often and the raceways at the hatchery are kept cleaner."

Trout fishing will be available on guided fly fishing trips at Callaway until the water temperatures begin rising in

the spring. Anglers will be asked to practice catch-and-release through the fall and winter, but they will be allowed to keep some fish to eat as spring approaches.

For more information on fishing at Callaway or to book a guided trip, call Kingfisher Outfitters at 706-663-5142.