



Oconaluftee Brown Trout, caught on #8 Sheep Fly in 1990



**Stream Blazer**

**Don Ray Howell**

**1943-1998**

Davidson River, Brevard, North Carolina

Don Ray grew up in Mitchell County and began fishing at an early age. He was often carried up the stream piggy back style by his father and fished off of his shoulders. He learned to fish from his father Don Daughtery Howell and his older brother Dwight G. Howell.

George “Cap” Wiese, and Cato Holler were both influential people in his fishing career.

He taught Business at Brevard High School from 1967 until his retirement in 1996. He enjoyed bowling and his life centered on all types of fishing, archery and hunting. He was fishing in a time during a lot of changes in the fishing industry – moving from cane rods to fiberglass then to graphite and boron. His favorite fly rod was a Sage RPL 8 1/2-foot. His favorite fly was a size 8 Sheep Fly (long shank).

He started Dwight and Don’s Custom Tackle business along with his brother Dwight in 1970. They specialized in handcrafted rods and custom tied flies. They were self-taught rod builders and both would go on to become significant members of the rod crafters guild.

In the late 1970s Don and Dwight closed the retail store and would only sell product via phone and mail order. When interviewed later in life the decision was made to close the retail store because it was taking too much time away from fishing.

Don Ray and Dwight were both founding members of Pisgah Chapter Trout Unlimited and the North Carolina Council of Trout Unlimited. Don served in a number of leadership roles



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**Don Ray at Age 3 with  
Mother Minnie Howell**



**Don Ray with Smallmouth Bass (1962)**



**Don Ray with his 27" brown trout  
From the Davidson River**



**Don Ray and Dwight Howell  
with Davidson River browns.**



In addition to trout fishing, Don Ray also was an avid bass angler, winning the 1976 United Bass Fisherman's Silver Cup Trail – defeating Roland Martin, Bill Dance, Jimmy Houston and all the other professional bass anglers of that generation.



New Year's Day stripper from Cark's Hill Reservoir (1992).