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SUMMER 2025

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## THE VIRGINIA SPORTSMAN MAGAZINE

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PUBLISHED BY VIRGINIA OUTDOOR MEDIA, LLC.  
THE VIRGINIA SPORTSMAN WAS FOUNDED IN 2003.

SUBSCRIPTION: \$25 PER YEAR, \$45 FOR TWO  
YEARS, OR \$65 FOR THREE YEARS.

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### The Mangrove Diaries

We all have that friend going on his or her first flats fishing trip, without us. Or maybe *you* are planning your first flats trip. In either case, this well-illustrated, mega-font book by Mike Watt, with practical and fun illustrations by Shea Monahan, provides straightforward advice for anyone about to set foot on the bow for the first time. If you're a veteran flats fisher, this book might provide a nice refresher course (How *do* you tie a Bimini? What *are* the benefits of Flouro?), but to be clear: It is very much for beginners. Put another way: This is the perfect gift for explaining the basics of saltwater flats fishing to your friend, so that you don't have to. —TB  
WILDRIVERPRESS.COM

### The Virginia Sportsman

The one time I fished Virginia was for some nice smallmouth near Lynchburg. But the stories I keep hearing about muskies on the James, smallies on the Potomac, and stripers on Smith Mountain Lake, tell me that Joe Shields, editor of *The Virginia Sportsman* magazine, has no shortage of material. Among ads for \$20K shotguns and southern estates, you'll find profiles on people like Dave Karszynski, or a travel story written by artist Alberto Rey. This 22-year-old magazine has columns on sportsman-adjacent activities like music, beer, and cooking (spoiler alert: smoked duck can be difficult). It is a classy read; well-written, edited, and designed. —TB  
THEVIRGINIASPORTSMAN.COM

### Reasons to be Cheerful

RTBC, a nonprofit online magazine, recently ran a story by Ben Goldfarb titled, "Saving Migratory Fish, One Culvert at a Time." The piece described the challenges facing—and solutions addressing—the problem of salmon and steelhead attempting to navigate outdated, often impassable culverts. RTBC was founded in 2018 by David Byrne (yes, that David Byrne), and is one of many recently launched media outlets finding its voice in the emerging field of "solutions-based journalism," where reporters are tasked not just with highlighting the problems, but with describing meaningful ways that those problems are being addressed. —TB  
REASONSTOBECHERFUL.WORLD

EDITOR AND PUBLISHER TOM BIE FEATURED *THE VIRGINIA SPORTSMAN* IN THE SPRING 2025 ISSUE OF *THE DRAKE* MAGAZINE. EXCERPT COURTESY OF *THE DRAKE*

# EDITOR'S NOTE

I read widely and often—especially today's leading sporting publications. The ones I admire most blend humor, narrative and stunning imagery while covering the subjects I hold dear: fly fishing, upland hunting, gear, adventure, travel and life outdoors. These magazines do more than inform; they cultivate communities of writers, photographers, artists and enthusiasts. They offer a vital platform to share work, tell stories and celebrate passions.

These truths hit home recently when Tom Bie, editor and publisher of *The Drake*—one of the finest fly-fishing publications around—shared a short blurb he'd written about *The Virginia Sportsman* in the Spring 2025 issue of his magazine.

It was a generous and thoughtful gesture. I'd recently sent Bie copies of our Winter 2025 issue, which featured a cover story on the award-winning fly-fishing writer Dave Karczynski. Bie is also a Karczynski fan who published the author's early work in *The Drake* and penned the foreword to his debut essay collection.

I sent Bie a thank-you note, and he replied: "My pleasure, Joe. Us print folks gotta support each other!"

Amen to that—and to reciprocity. In the same spirit of partnership, I'm delighted to welcome *Strung* Magazine subscribers to *The Virginia Sportsman*. Founded by hunters and anglers, *Strung* celebrates the pursuit of wild fish and game through authentic content created by those who live it—connecting a community that values conservation, tradition and

the raw beauty of time spent in wild places.

In our Summer 2025 issue, we're pleased to introduce Russell Worth Parker, editor in chief of the *Tom Beckbe Field Journal*, book author and magazine writer published in the *New York Times*, *Garden and Gun* Magazine, *Outdoor Life* and numerous other print and electronic outlets. Parker's squirrel-hunting narrative and profile of his buddy, novelist David Joy, is a welcome addition to our growing community of highly regarded contributors.

We're also excited to share another travelogue by Alberto Rey, a fly fisher, retired educator, painter, writer and filmmaker. His multifaceted artistry offers an inspiring lens on the fly-fishing life, and we think you will enjoy his account and images from his experience fly fishing the unpressured waters of Slovenia.

Lastly, we're thrilled to welcome back John A. Shtogren, a lifelong hunter, award-winning outdoor writer and former editor of *The Virginia Sportsman*. It was nice to read his voice in action again in his latest work, "High on Hogs: Fair Chase Boar Hunting in the Southeast" (John A. Shtogren, LLC, November 2024, 140 pages). I think you will appreciate learning more about this sportsman and his call to action for the ethical hunting of wild boar using fair chase standards.

Thank you for reading about sporting life and culture. We appreciate your support for our important community.

*Joe Shields*

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# Slovenia: An Unpressured Fly-fishing Destination

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STORY, PHOTOS AND ART BY ALBERTO REY

**W**hile traveling to remote fly-fishing destinations around the world, I have found that there are hotbeds of great fishing that are not well known. Slovenia is one of these underrecognized but very productive fishing locations. It has been only in the past few years that I have heard anglers discussing rumors of its merits, but I have never met anyone who has fished there.

I probably would never have gone to this former Eastern Bloc country, which at one time was part of the Soviet Union, if I had not met Robert Redding, the owner of the Krka Lodge in Slovenia, at an Orvis partners meeting. We chatted for a long while as anglers tend to do when discussing their addiction to the sport. By the end of our animated discussion, I was dreaming about visiting him and realized that I needed to add this destination to our upcoming trip to Europe.

A few months later, my wife Janeil and I found ourselves on a vaporetto (public water bus) on the Canal de San Marco heading to the international art exhibition in Venice. As we explored pavilions filled with some of the world's most important art, I kept thinking about the fishing adventure that awaited us



ONE OF THE COUNTLESS GLACIAL POOLS THAT HOLD RAINBOW AND MARBLE TROUT ON THE SOCA RIVER.



in a few days.

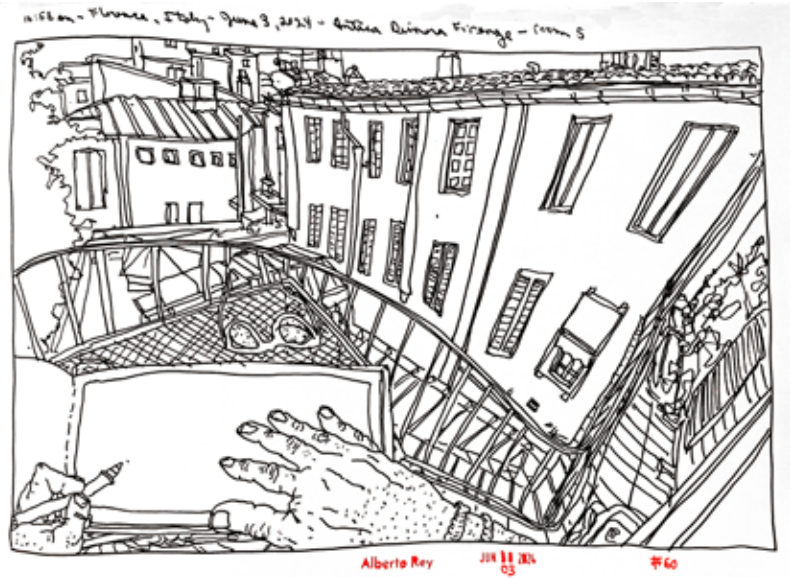
I had somehow convinced my wife, a nonangler, to join me on a three-and-a-half-hour bus ride to a little lodge in a remote section of the country that we knew nothing about. We soon discovered, however, that the Krka Lodge is located within a tiny village that happens to be at the epicenter of some of the world's best trout fishing.

Krka Lodge has 50 trout streams within an hour's drive and an additional 50 if you were interested in driving another hour. The lodge is built on the banks of the Krka River, and it is not an exaggeration to say that you can have a 20-plus inch rainbow on your line within minutes after your arrival. You can find large rainbows throughout the river, and

you only need to walk a few minutes to find them slurping on dries.

The real trophies for me, however, are the beautifully colored Karst brown trout that are native to the region. A 33-inch beauty was caught a few months before our arrival on a streamer when the river was high and off color. The river is also home to the Huchen (Hucho Hucho),

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REY'S DRAWING OF VENICE FROM THE GRAND CANAL



REY CONTEMPLATES HIS PLAN OF ACTION DURING HIS FIRST MOMENTS ON THE SOCA RIVER.



THE AVAILABILITY OF NUMEROUS NEST-BUILDING CADDIS PROVIDE A BOUNTIFUL DIET FOR LARGE RAINBOW AND MARBLE TROUT ON THE SOCA RIVER.

which are closely related to taimen, the largest salmonid in the world. Taimen prowl the stream, and several anglers have been surprised by Hucho Hucho attacking their catches while they were reeling them in.

If you want to treat yourself to a unique landscape and epic experience, you will need to take the scenic two-hour ride through the Julian Alps to the Soča

(Isonzo) River Valley. As you zig-zag your way up and down steep lush mountain sides on a stone road built by Russian prisoners of war, you will drive through what was once one of the bloodiest battlefields during World War I. This is the location that inspired Hemingway's novel, "A Farewell to Arms."

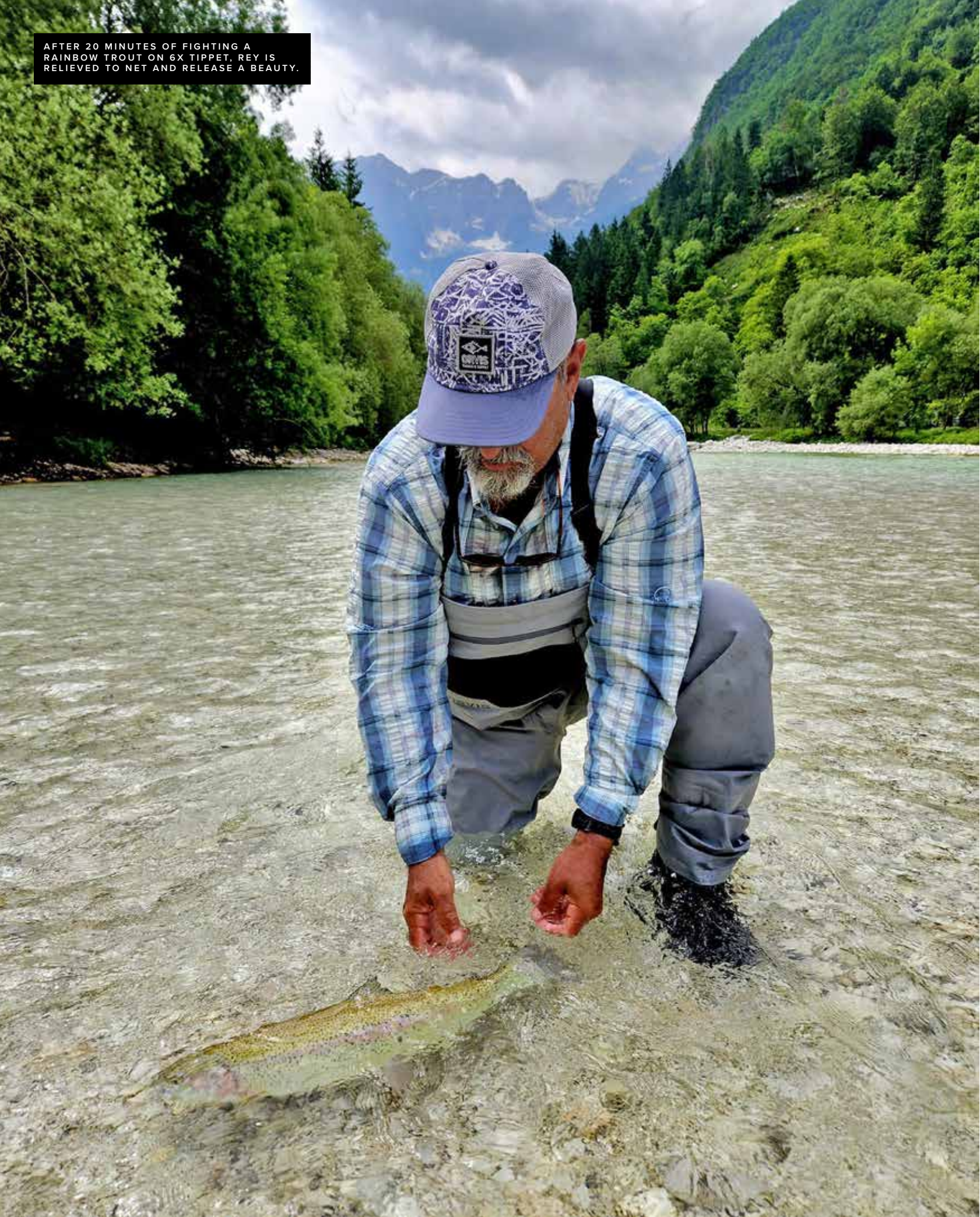
When we reached the sacred valley in the early morning, a thick mist blanketed

the river. A subtle breeze softly rolled the fog back and forth over the gin-clear emerald-green water.

As I looked down at my feet to cross the stream, I could see rocks dotted with hundreds of nest-building caddis. About 30 feet from us, you could see dimples on the water as large rainbows and native marble trout swam laterally across the current to pick off blue winged olives



AFTER 20 MINUTES OF FIGHTING A RAINBOW TROUT ON 6X TIPPET, REY IS RELIEVED TO NET AND RELEASE A BEAUTY.



TOP: A NATIVE KARST BROWN TROUT ROSE TO A TAN CADDIS ON THE KRKA RIVER.  
BOTTOM: MOMENTS BEFOREHAND, THE AGGRESSIVE KARST BROWN TROUT SNATCHED THIS GREEN DRAKE-LOOKING MAYFLY ON THE KRKA RIVER.



and caddis as they drifted by.

I slowly got into position downstream of the rising fish, took a deep breath and focused on the task at hand. I surprised myself by making two accurate casts under overhanging branches upstream and to the right of feeding trout. The small, pink-hackled parachute post fly, a local favorite, floated near the spot where the fish had been feeding. I did not, however, get any response. I had a few looks from other fish later that morning as the fog lifted but the feeding remained slow until we switched to small, weighted nymphs on 6x tippet in fast-moving currents. The large, elongated shadows on the streambed provided easy casting targets. These fish were, fortunately, more obliging but were tricky to land on the thin line.

I periodically lifted my head from staring at the hydraulics of the currents to partake in the stunning scenery around me. I realized





AFTER REY TRIED A HANDFUL OF DRY-FLY PATTERNS ON RISING BROWN TROUT, A BEAUTIFUL BROWN COULD NOT RESIST A WEIGHTLESS BROWN STONEFLY NYMPH TRAILING BEHIND A LARGE MAYFLY PATTERN.

how fortunate I was to be part, if only temporarily, of this environment. By some twist of fate, I met Redding and found myself in this spot on the globe.

I have heard anglers say that this realization makes fishing seem inconsequential and that's true, but it is because of this sport, that I was standing, for hours, in the middle of a stream watching as an extraordinary part of the world subtly changed around me.

These unexpected moments keep me searching for the next location where I can experience this spiritual connection to nature and history. ☿

Alberto Rey is a fly fisher, retired educator, painter, writer and filmmaker who has run a youth fly-fishing program for 30 years. Rey's paintings can be found in over 20 museum collections and have been in over 200

exhibitions. His films and videos have been screened internationally, and his illustrated articles and artwork have graced the covers and pages of *Gray's Sporting Journal*, *Art of Angling Journal*, *Fish and Fly Magazine*, *American Angler*, *Fly Fishing International Magazine*, *The Drake*, *Saltwater Fisherman*, *Anglers Journal* and *Buffalo Spree*. Learn more at [albertorey.com](http://albertorey.com).



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