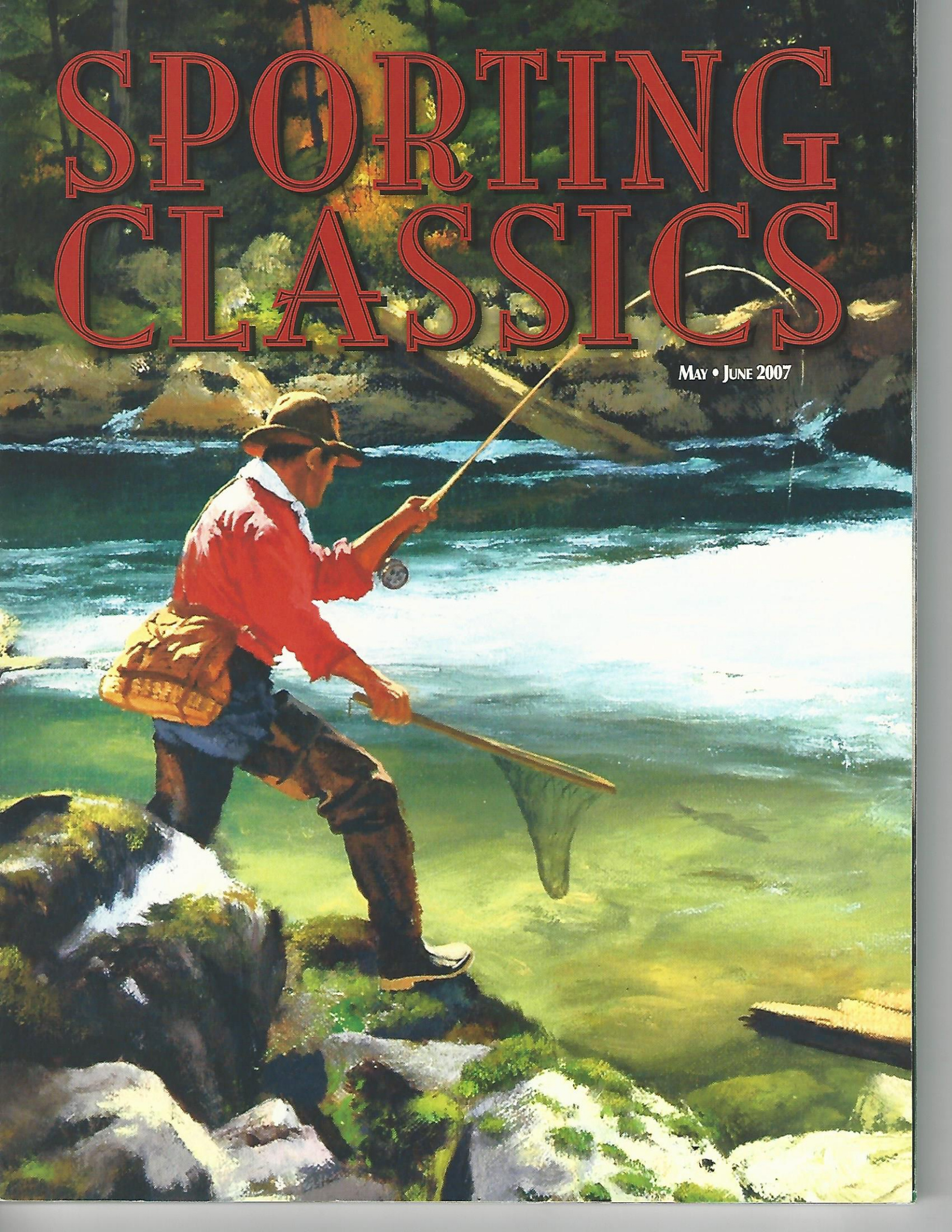


SPORTING CLASSICS

MAY • JUNE 2007



Travel

By John Ross



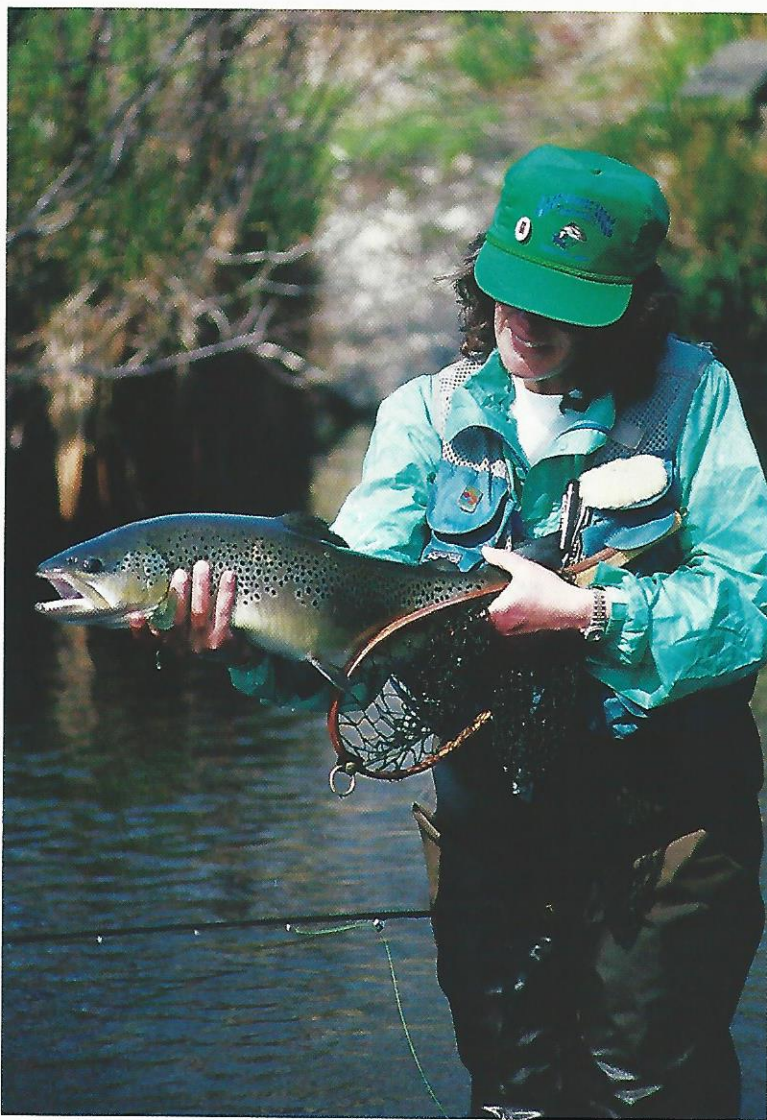
Had I my druthers, I'd put my computer in mothballs and just fish the whole month of May. First, I'd hie my haunches to Missoula to catch the shank of the skwala hatch on the Bitterroot. Then I'd jet into the Big Apple – yep, New York City – rent a car and lose no time hustling out to Connetquot River State Park Preserve. The third leg of my trip would find me close to home, prowling those precious freestone streams in Shenandoah National Park that hold the best stocks of wild brook trout in the southern Appalachians.

The skwala is a big stonefly (*Skwala parrella*) that begins to hatch on the Bitterroot in February and continues into May. Like the northern migration of waterfowl, the appearance of skwala is a sure sign that spring's coming, news that's especially welcome in winter weary western Montana.

Unlike many species, skwalas come off on bright sunny days. What could be finer than the sun on your back and big fish rising to a dry fly you can actually see on the water. Among the most effective patterns is a #10 Chernobyl ant fished on a six-weight.

A couple of years ago I was in Missoula

Where will you find the author in May? Most likely at one of three wonderful trout streams somewhere between The Big Apple and the Bitterroot.



JOHN ROSS

Christine Brakel holds a big, strikingly marked brown fresh from the Connetquot River in Long Island, New York.

doing a story on Dan Cooper's tack-driving rifles and he hooked me up with Joe Cummings, chief of Classic Journeys Outfitters. Joe met me at my motel, and we drove about forty miles south, straight up the Bitterroot Valley. We wrestled his Hyde driftboat into the water and paid

to have his truck shuttled to the takeout point down near Stevensville.

The river was low and clear. Snowmelt had yet to turn it ugly. Air temperatures danced between the high 50s and 60s. A light wool turtleneck under a long-sleeved fishing shirt was all I needed. Bank-side clumps of grass had turned bright green and the brush was beginning to bud. We rigged our rods; Joe handed me an ant that I tied onto my 4X leader.

There began one of the best floats I've ever taken. Joe held the boat within easy casting range of the cobbled bank. All I had to do was chuck my bug close to the rocks, throw a slight upstream mend, and a swirl would engulf the fly. The fish, west slope cutthroat, ranged between twelve and eighteen inches. Now, I'd be lying if I insisted that we took fish on every cast.

But they were so eager that neither of us thought to count. Every lie that should hold a fish – eddies behind

boulders, riffles, the heads of gentle pools – had at least one in residence. And one run produced a twelve-inch bull trout, a fish that rarely take dries.

If you head out this way, plan to spend a couple days on the Bitterroot. As the river warms, hatches work their way upstream. And don't overlook Norman Maclean's home river, the Big Blackfoot, or Rock Creek. Guess you'll have to devote a week or so. Then catch the last plane out of Missoula for Salt Lake City (forget the Provo) and sleep on the red-eye headed for New York's JFK.


Pick up your rental car and make the thirty-minute trek up Long Island's Southern State Parkway to Connetquot. Founded as the South Side Sportsmen's Club in 1866, the 3,400-acre preserve with its three miles of spring creek became a state park in 1973. The preserve is home to one of the oldest continually operating hatcheries in the country. It produces leviathan browns, rainbows and brookies.

Fishing here is a straight-forward affair. For \$20, each angler "rents" a beat for a session. In May, sessions

begin at 7 a.m., noon and 4 p.m. For the fee, anglers receive rights to 100 yards or so of the river. Fed by seeps from the island's glacial moraine, the river, stream really, is easily waded. A short five-weight is ideal. Standard mayfly and caddis always produce as do nymphs and streamers. Twenty-fish sessions are not at all unusual, nor are twenty-inch trout.

When you've had your fill of these Rubenesque beauties, beat it back to JFK, catch a flight to Washington Dulles, rent a car and drive to the booming metropolis of Syria, about two hours southwest of the airport. Syria lies on the flank of Shenandoah National Park and is home to Graves Mountain Lodge, a fine old spread with an excellent country kitchen favored by anglers who come to eat and fish the park.

A bed of basalt makes the creeks in the park's northeast quadrant uncommonly alkaline and thus rich in aquatic insects. Prolific hatches of caddis and mayflies feed wild brook trout of six to twelve inches that are colored as richly as mountain wildflowers. Among the most popular waters are the Hughes, Hazel, Rose, Robinson, Conway and Rapidan – all plunge pool streams with short stretches of riffles and runs. Good anglers hook one trout in every pool.

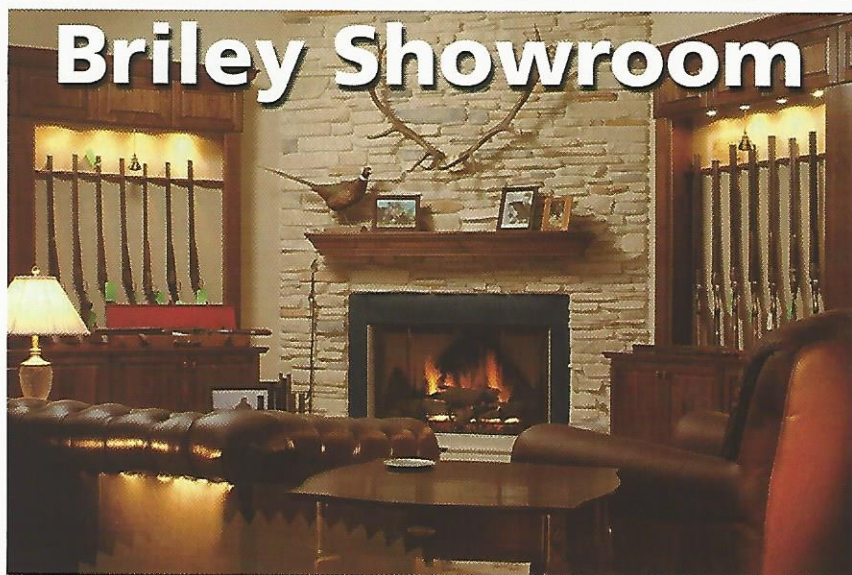
Where will you find me in May? A book in progress calls for a chapter on the Bitterroot, my agent is in Manhattan, and when I've had enough of my computer (or it's had enough of me), I often make for Herbert Hoover's retreat, high on the Rapidan, there to ponder which fly will perform best at dusk. 

IF YOU WANT TO GO

Joe Cummings can be reached at Classic Journey Outfitters, P. O. Box 17485, Missoula, MT, 59808; www.classicjourneyoutfitters.com; 877-327-7878; 406-327-7818.

Contact Connetquot River State Park Preserve by writing PO Box 505, Oakdale, NY 11769 or call 631-581-1005.

For rates and information, call Graves Mountain Lodge (Rt. 670, Syria, VA 22743) at 540-923-4312; www.gravesmountain.com.



Briley Showroom

Blaser Standard Double Rifle / .470 N.E. (NEW)	\$8,450
C7-17 J. Roberts & Sons 20ga. 25" @2 3/4" w/Briley choke sys. With Case	\$8,995
C7-5 J. Lang & Co. Hammer Guns / Matched pair 12ga. 28" bbls. 2 3/4"	\$29,995
04-1042 Grant SLE Sidelever 12ga. 2 3/4" F/F	\$12,495
C6-98 William Evans S/S 16ga. 2 gun set	\$19,995
I6-23 William Evans 12ga. 30" 2 1/2"	\$5,000
04-961 Holland & Holland 12ga. 28" 2 3/4"	\$9,000
C7-28 Remington 3200 4 Bbl. set w/Americase	\$4,650
N6-132 Merkel 140-2.1 Custom Safari w/ Octagon bbl. .470 N.E. (NEW)	\$13,995
C6-25 Leeson Hammer Gun 20 ga. 1/4 & Full	\$9,700
C6-15 Stephen Grant Hammer Gun Sidelever 12 ga. 30" Damascus Bbls. Mod/Im	\$7,000
C6-11 Lancaster 12 ga. 30" Damascus Bbl. 2 3/4" IC/M w/ Original case.	\$6,700
04-1039 Stephen Grant Best sidelock Circa 1895 12. ga. 30" bbl. 2 3/4"	\$12,495
C5-353 Gamba Daytona 12 ga. 30" F/XF	\$5,100
C5-126 Perazzi Mirage 12 ga. 28"	\$6,500
C6-47 Holland & Holland Best Quality 10 ga. / Chambers lined for 12 ga. 3"	\$6,800
C5-251 Greener Empire 12 ga. 30" bbl. 2 3/4" F/F	\$4,495
I6-10 William Powell 12 ga. 30" bbl. 2 3/4" Boxlock/Ejectors	\$7,000
04-1041 Watson Bros. 12 ga. 30" bbls. 2 3/4" IC/M	\$10,000
04-958 Westley Richards 12 ga. 30" bbls. 2 3/4"	\$6,495
04-807 William Ford 12 ga. 28" 2 3/4" IC/M	\$8,500
04-808 W.H. Pollard 12 ga. 30" 2 3/4" IC/M	\$9,085
C7-14 J Purdey 20 ga. Hammer Gun w/ 28 ga. chambers 2 3/4" IC/M	\$8,250
N6-6 D.V. Johnson 20 ga. Hammer Gun w/ 29 7/8" Damascus bbls. 2 1/2"	\$28,950



BRILEY
A Legacy of Shooting Innovation.

Briley Manufacturing
1230 Lumpkin Rd. • Houston, TX. 77043
800.331.5718 • www.briley.com