

# Colorado's Hidden Gem: The Rio Grande on the Fly

With Presley Garcia

**D. Roger Maves:** [00:00:00] Welcome to Ask About Fly Fishing Internet Radio, your source for learning more about fly fishing in cold water, warm water, and salt water. Hello, I'm Roger Maves, your host for tonight's show. On this broadcast, we'll be featuring Presley Garcia and he'll be answering your questions on Colorado's Hidden Gem: The Rio Grande River on the Fly.

This show will be 90 minutes in length and we're broadcasting live over the internet. If you'd like to ask Presley a question, just go to our homepage at [askaboutflyfishing.com](http://askaboutflyfishing.com) and use the Q and A text box to send us your question. We'll receive your question immediately, and we'll try to answer as many of them as possible on the show tonight.

And while you're there, make sure you sign up to receive our announcements so you don't miss out on any of our future broadcast. Just fill out the form on the right side of our homepage and we'll let you know when the next live show will be. This broadcast is being recorded and will be available for playback on our website about 48 hours after the show ends.

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We sure appreciate it if you share our podcast and when you do, use the hashtag, ask about fly fishing and hashtag fly fishing. In fact, if you have a moment now, do it right now and let other people know about the great content that we publish.

When we return, we'll be talking with Presley Garcia about Colorado's Hidden Gem: The Rio Grande River on the Fly

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Before we introduce Presley, I'd like to let you know about the great prizes we have to give away tonight for a drawing tonight we'll be giving away a one year membership to Fly Fishers International and a one year membership to Trout Unlimited. Now, if you haven't registered yet for the drawing, you can do so now. Just go to our homepage at [askaboutflyfishing.com](http://askaboutflyfishing.com) and look for that link under tonight's section that says, register for our free drawing.

Click on that link and fill out the form and we'll announce the winners at the end of the show. We'll also be giving away a copy of Presley's book, courtesy of Stackpole books, one of their books, and I do have a list of that for everyone that wins. And what we'll do at the end of the show, whoever the winner is, I'll send out the list of available books and then that person will be able to pick from that list.

So here's how you can win one of the Stackpole books. You must be the first person to answer the question I ask at the end of the show, and the question will be about something we [00:03:00] talked about during the show. And yeah, you must submit your answer along with your name and location using the text box on our homepage. This is the same text box that you can ask questions during the show with. So listen closely, take some good notes, pay attention, and maybe you'll be proud winner of a new Stackpole book.

Our guest tonight is Presley Garcia Presley was born and raised in Colorado's St. Louis Valley. Presley has long called the Rio Grande home while fishing has been a part of life. It wasn't until college that fly fishing entered the picture, one cast with a fly rod. He was hooked for good, driven by a passion for helping others. He pursued a career in education earning his bachelor's degree from Adam State University. Today he works as a dedicated special education teacher. When school is out, whether it's summer, weekends, or holidays, he trades the classroom for the river guiding on the Rio Grande and other southwestern waters. Sharing his deep love for fly fishing with others.

With a lifetime of experience [00:04:00] fishing the Rio Grande drainage, he still finds each day on the river a learning opportunity. When not guiding he can be found, casting a line on his favorite Colorado Springs camping, teaching, or enjoying time with his wife and their three children. Grateful to live, work, and fish in a place he loves. He considers it a true privilege to share it with others.

Presley, welcome to Ask About Fly Fishing Internet Radio.

**Presley Garcia:** Thank you. I appreciate it.

**D. Roger Maves:** Yeah. And uh, as you just told me before the show, you just got off the river. Huh? You still got wet waders on or what?

**Presley Garcia:** Uh, yeah, I was wet wading a little bit today. I, uh, floated and yeah, my, uh, sandals are still on my, uh, wet wading pants are still a little wet here. So yeah, I just got off the river a little bit ago.

**D. Roger Maves:** Okay, good. Well, how was fishing today?

**Presley Garcia:** It was as good as it probably could have gotten for this time of year. I shouldn't say this time of year, but the low flows, high water temps. Um, it was actually pretty good. It was a more productive day than we've had in, you know, the last [00:05:00] couple days, so it wasn't bad at all.

**D. Roger Maves:** Well, good, good, good. Yeah. Water's getting warm in the Rockies here. Huh? We're getting outside, hot weather.

**Presley Garcia:** Oh, yeah, anywhere Mountain west. Yeah, anywhere in the Rocky Mountain West. I mean, you gotta be careful, mindful of those water temps right about now.

**D. Roger Maves:** Yeah, yeah, yeah. Like you say, with the low water levels, then they just warm even faster, right? So,

**Presley Garcia:** Right.

**D. Roger Maves:** Yeah. Okay, good. Well first of all, I always try to orient people 'cause we do have an international audience, so, um, some people might not know where the Rio Grande River is. In fact, I was talking to my, uh, grandson and he says, well, I've heard the name, you know, we took him fishing there not too long ago. And he was saying, well, I've heard that name before. And I go, yeah, well it's a famous river. So tell us a bit about the Rio Grande. 'cause it starts pretty close to where you fish most of the time, right?

**Presley Garcia:** Yeah, yeah. So, uh, the Rio Grande, where I'm fishing most of the time is in southern Colorado, south Central Colorado in the San Luis Valley. And it [00:06:00] starts kind of at the headwaters on Stony Pass, which about 40 miles, give or take. West of Creed on the east side of the Continental Divide. And so that's kind of where the Rio Grande River starts.

And I believe, if I'm correct, it's the second longest running river in the United States as it flows all the way down from Stony Pass through the San Luis Valley down south into New Mexico and creating the border between Texas and Mexico before dumping into the Gulf of Mexico there.

**D. Roger Maves:** Right.

**Presley Garcia:** So, but primarily where, you know, trout fishing or where I'm located is South Fork, Colorado Creed area, Creed Colorado, closer to the San Juan Mountain range.

**D. Roger Maves:** Right, right. Now the water is coming from a dam, right? For your fishing.

**Presley Garcia:** Yeah. It's not a traditional tail water by any means. It's more of a freestone stream, but there is a dam impoundment [00:07:00] about, you know five to 10 miles from the headwaters where all the small tributaries come in to form Rio Grande Reservoir. And then from there the reservoir releases water and below the reservoir. It definitely fishes like a tailwater and it's fun up there. However, you know, further east you go the more it turns into a freestone stream.

**D. Roger Maves:** Okay? Okay. What makes the Rio Grande in Colorado such a special place to fly fish?

**Presley Garcia:** I think something that is really unique about it is there's so many different spots. There's a ton of different access points.

You also, you know, you have the main Rio Grande River, but then you have so many different tributaries. You could spend a lifetime fishing this area and not step foot in the same little tributary. And the fact that you could do that on most days, depending on the time of year, not see another person, it makes it pretty special. You know, the pressure on this river has grown some in the last four or five years.

However, it's [00:08:00] still nothing compared to the Arkansas, the Gunnison in the Colorado. Other notable streams here in Colorado, the pressure still isn't like those rivers. So it's, it's kind of a little smaller, personable river that you kind of will have to yourself. You know, you're generally gonna have a good stretch of river to yourself for the most part.

**D. Roger Maves:** Now. Um, I'm trying to, and, uh. When we're talking about from the headwaters down now. Where you normally fish is south of Creed, right?

**Presley Garcia:** Yeah, yeah. Generally where I guide is about right between Creed and South Fork. I do fish a lot in the upper reaches of the river, but I'm guiding closer to the town of South Fork in between Creed and South Fork.

**D. Roger Maves:** And yeah, when we were fishing up there, we were fishing in a, just a beautiful canyon.

**Presley Garcia:** Mm-hmm.

**D. Roger Maves:** And what is further, you know, are put in, what was it, Palisade, was it? Um, camp,

**Presley Garcia:** Yeah. You put in a Palisade camp.

**D. Roger Maves:** [00:09:00] Now are there, um, do you do any guiding between there and Creed then? Is there any good fishable water up there?

**Presley Garcia:** There there's a ton of fishable water up there. We have our permits set. From that point down. And so anytime somebody wants to take a trip up river, you know, I love to fish up river myself.

We just don't have the permits to guide up there. So we send 'em to our buddies over there in Creed at Rio Grande Angler and have them fish the upper section with those guides and they have fun up there, so.

**D. Roger Maves:** Okay. Now is that a float area as well or is that more rating?

**Presley Garcia:** Yeah, you definitely could, yeah, you could definitely float a lot of that river up there. I like to break the river down kind of in three sections. The, you know, upper Rio Grande is um, I break it down into three sections. So I kind of break it down from the headwaters to about Creed is, you know, I call it the upper section. And then from Creed down to South Fork, I call that kind of the middle section. And then from South Fork down to the town of [00:10:00] Del Norte, that's mostly our lower section.

And up there in the upper section, you know, above Creed there is tons of water you could float, you know, all depending on the water flow. But most years they're up there floating. Most of the year, just like we would down in South Fork.

**D. Roger Maves:** Okay. Okay. Now what about below South Fork towards Del Norte, like you said, is that good fishing water? Marginal? Is it better?

**Presley Garcia:** Yeah, so

**D. Roger Maves:** In the middle section or?

**Presley Garcia:** Um, generally from South Fork, the bridge at 149, which is like you're going towards Creed from that bridge down to a canal diversion, maybe a mile west of the town of Del Norte is the gold metal section, um, on the Rio Grande River.

So that is basically, I can't remember the exact requirements for gold metal fishing streams in Colorado, but it's a ton of fish in a small amount of water, basically. I think it's like 300 pounds of fish per water acre or water mile [00:11:00] or something like that. And so there's a ton of fish in that section from South Fork down to Del Norte.

And I would argue, you know, there's. Bigger fish in that section. The upper section generally has more fish, I would say just not the sheer size. There is big fish up there as well, but the lower section, the closer you get to Del Norte there are those 20 inch fish, 25 inch fish kind of hanging down in that area, so,

**D. Roger Maves:** Oh, okay. Okay. Now I did, I got a question in here from Matthew in La Vista, Colorado.

**Presley Garcia:** Mm-hmm.

**D. Roger Maves:** He said, are there trout to catch on the Rio between Alamosa and New Mexico? He says, I'm thinking specifically the Rio as it goes under the highway between San Luis and Manassa. I have driven over it on the way to the, the Conejos, but never stopped to fish.

**Presley Garcia:** Mm-hmm.

**D. Roger Maves:** How does fishing continue on down from Del Norte to New Mexico On the Rio Grande?

**Presley Garcia:** Yeah, so from [00:12:00] Del Norte, um, till about Monte Vista, which is where I live. You're gonna have some trout still in the river systems, but then you also add in the carp and the sucker fish and the pike. And I've never really fished, I've floated down there the section that Matthew was talking about.

I've never fished it. I know a ton of people that fished for pike down in that area. So I would imagine, you know, you, you might find a trout here or there, but in all reality, if you're gonna fish that you might as well grab your seven weight and a six inch fly and catch some pike if you're gonna be something like that. I know further down into New Mexico you go, you start getting into like some bass in the river and things like that.

**D. Roger Maves:** Okay. Okay. Yeah.

**Presley Garcia:** Yeah. Um, that specific spot that Matthew's talking about, I would definitely say is probably more of a, a pike haven than it would be a trout haven, but that doesn't mean that they're not in there.

**D. Roger Maves:** Yeah. Right, right. They're probably in a pike's mouth more than likely.

**Presley Garcia:** Yeah, exactly. [00:13:00] Yeah, exactly.

**D. Roger Maves:** They probably don't last for very long. Um, we did get a, this kind of a long question, and maybe I'll just break it down, but Carl in Colchester, Connecticut wanted to know, and he's talking about a section below the dam, a 30 mile bridge down to Squaw Creek.

Now, is that the Impoundment dam that you were talking about a minute ago?

**Presley Garcia:** Yes, that is the Rio Grande Reservoir.

**D. Roger Maves:** Okay.

**Presley Garcia:** That is the big impoundment dam there. Yeah.

**D. Roger Maves:** Okay. And he was asking about winter shutdowns of, you know, lack of water coming out of that dam and so forth, and, uh, consequently kind of affecting the Rio Grande as a fishery, you know, during the winter season.

**Presley Garcia:** Mm-hmm.

**D. Roger Maves:** Can you speak to that? Tell us what you know about, you know, what, how that's affecting

**Presley Garcia:** Yeah.

**D. Roger Maves:** Or what's going on or politically or whatever happening there.

**Presley Garcia:** Right. Yeah. So I know a little bit about it. I don't know much. Our shop owner, Rick, is a big activist and is kind of get on board with all this stuff, [00:14:00] but they re, I can't remember, some 10 odd, 12 odd years ago. They redid the dam, they fixed it supposedly because it had a leak. It was old and so they fixed it and when they fixed it, they got a big rant from, you know, some government agencies, some Trout Unlimited things like that, that are made for the health of the fishery. And with that promise it was to keep optimal flows in the river year round and keep, uh, channel, which optimal flows, a channel flowing at 30 mile campground throughout the winter.

Well, during the winter time, some odd years had passed five or six before anybody actually realized. 'cause you can't really drive up there in the winter unless you have a snowmobile that there's no water coming out of that dam in the winter time. And what had happened was that when they put these, uh.

Turbines in there to release water. They don't work in the cold temperatures of the winter. They shut off because it's too cold. They can't [00:15:00] control the flows in the winter, so it kind of has killed the fisheries slightly up there. Those trout are a lot more hardy than we give 'em credit for. They're a lot more, they're tougher than we think they are.

However, it is a major factor, and I know there's a bunch of groups and activists getting together and trying to, I believe it's called like a Healthy Rio Grande or a Healthy Upper Rio, something like that. I'll have to get that specific information, but they're kind of coming together and trying to get the right things in place.

An optimal flow for times, like right now where water temperatures are getting high, an optimal flow in the winter to keep the trout, you know, have a little more flowing water in the wintertime and things like that. But yes, it has uh, definitely been a tedious thing.

**D. Roger Maves:** Yeah, yeah, yeah. Kind of tough to deal with.

You think they would've thought of that before they put 'em in, huh? The turbines?

**Presley Garcia:** Yeah. Yeah. And so, so they not only kind of lied about like, we're gonna keep an optimal flow in the winter time [00:16:00] for more holding water for the fish during the winter. They also kind of lied about the optimal flows in the summer as well.

I've been up there the last three years, and in July August you get a full algae bloom in the river and it just depletes the oxygen right below the dam. I mean, that should not happen right below a dam.

**D. Roger Maves:** Yeah.

**Presley Garcia:** And the Rio Grande River is a agriculturally driven river, not a recreational driven river like the Arkansas River, just an hour north of us.

And so they typically only release water for agricultural purposes rather than the fish are dying. The water's hot, things like that. They're not really, they will. If it gets super bad, but you gotta see a lot of dead fish and really bad water temperatures before they start sending us water.

**D. Roger Maves:** Mm. Yeah. Mm. Interesting. Yeah. Well let's take a quick break here, Presley, and uh, when we come back we'll talk more about access and where you can fish and how you can fish and the Rio Grande. So [00:17:00] we'll be right back.

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You are listening to Ask About Fly Fishing Internet Radio. We're talking with Presley Garcia about Colorado's Hidden Gem: The Rio Grande on the Fly. If you'd like to ask Presley a question, just go to our homepage, fill out that Q and A text box and send us your question.

So Presley, I always ask my guests, you know, at this point in the show, you know, what's going on in your fly fishing world. Tell us about what you do down there, you know, the shop you work out [00:18:00] of and how people can find out about your guide services and stuff like that.

**Presley Garcia:** Yeah, so I work for Wolf Creek Anglers. It is a guide service out of South Fork, Colorado. And like I said earlier, we're primarily fishing the river between Creed and Del Norte, I mean, creed and South Fork is where kind of our access points are. And then we float all the way down to the town of Del Norte. Primarily I'm doing float trips. I will do walk wade trips, but the river is kind of best suited for float trips most of the year.

So at least during the summer time. And so, yeah I've kind of been running float trips all summer there in South Fork out of Wolf Creek Anglers. And the best way to kind of get ahold of me or you know, book a trip there is to call Wolf Creek Anglers Fly Shop in South Fork or find me on any social media platform and kind of reach out.

Yeah. And then that's kind of the thing that's going.

**D. Roger Maves:** What's the website address for Wolf Creek Anglers?

**Presley Garcia:** It is, I believe it is [wolfcreekanglers.com](http://wolfcreekanglers.com). [00:19:00] And the anglers have an S at the end. [wolfcreekanglers.com](http://wolfcreekanglers.com).

**D. Roger Maves:** Right. Okay, good. Good. All right, thanks for sharing. So that's where you can find them down there and or just Google the, uh, Rio Grande and you'll find 'em that way too, I'm sure.

So one question was, you know, what kind of access is available for do it yourself anglers?

And how important is a boat for covering water? Now you just said it's. Kind of a river that that fish is better floating rather than wading. But when we were there, we saw a lot of people, um, and I don't know if it was through public lands or private, but a lot of people that were had walked in from somewhere and were fishing.

So can you kind of tell us about the access?

**Presley Garcia:** Yeah, so there's a ton of boat ramps. So if you're an individual who has a boat and wants to do your own floating or kayak fishing or whatever the case may be, there's a ton of boat ramps up and down the river right next to the highways. So they're pretty easy to see for the most part, where the boat ramps are.

And then as far as, [00:20:00] uh, you know, kind of walk wade access and kind of doing it yourself there, there's state wildlife areas designated between Creed and South Fork called Collier State Wildlife Area, and I believe there's three boat ramps through this state wildlife area. I believe it's like some odd five, six river miles of public access.



Plus above upper Coller, you know, there's upper, middle and lower Coller. Plus above upper Coller, there's Palisade Campground, which has national forest access. And so there's a ton of access in that area, close to South Fork. And then there's a bunch more. As you go up towards Creed, there's Marshall Park Campground, Rio Grande Campground, and then closer to the reservoir. There's a ton of national forest access above the reservoir and right at the reservoir at 30 Mile Campground.

What is something that a lot of people overlook is there are fishing easements between the town of Del Norte [00:21:00] and South Fork. A lot of 'em are only accessible by boat. So if you have a kayak, you could, let's say, put in at a boat ramp, find one of these fishing easements, you know, which you kind of have to talk to your local guides or fly shops, or find the resources online. Find out where the fishing easement is and you could, you know, park your kayak and get out and wade fish about a mile of river by yourself downstream.

**D. Roger Maves:** Oh, I see. So you can, uh, yeah, but you can't, the only way you can get to it by boat. Yeah. That's unusual. Um,

**Presley Garcia:** Yeah. Yeah.

**D. Roger Maves:** So, so for folks who are not familiar with Colorado's river laws, private parties own the river underneath it. Okay. So if you're on private, going through private property, you can't anchor or stop and wade in those private areas. But if you can access the river by a, by a bridge or something, or a put in, then you can float through those areas. You just can't stop and wade and anchor and that kind of thing. [00:22:00] So, a little bit different than like Montana.

Where, um, uh, yeah, you can wade up and down the river up to the high watermark anywhere you want, as long as you can access it through some kind of public access point. So I think our laws are pretty the same as Wyoming, where they're, again, the private land owners own under the water, but they don't own the water, so that's good.

**Presley Garcia:** Right? Yeah, yeah.

**D. Roger Maves:** Yeah, yeah, yeah. So that's interesting. Yeah, I've never actually heard of that before, so that's kind of cool. Dave Murphy basically asked the same question, Don, up in Bozeman, what's the access for walk wade anglers? So it sounds like there's quite a bit of walk wade access all up and down the river one way or the other, huh? So,

**Presley Garcia:** Yes. Yeah, there is. I think a common misconception on the Rio Grande is that it's only accessible by floating, though that is a lot of our favorite thing to do around here. There is a ton of walk wade access. I know a lot of people that I've talked to from New Mexico say, [00:23:00] isn't that that whole entire river private. And I'm like, no, there's a lot of public access in, uh, throughout the river. So,

**D. Roger Maves:** Yeah. Yeah. We had a question that came in here on the internet, Rick in, uh, North Carolina, he asked what would be the best months of the year to fish this river, if not during the summer months? What's the main techniques for catching the bigger fish dries, nymphs, or streamer opportunities?

So, let's just address the first part, you know, what are the better times of the year to fish the Rio Grande?

**Presley Garcia:** Yeah. So I would say the better times to fish the Rio Grande in summer would be the month of June is usually your most consistent month to fish. You're gonna have most of our prolific hatches at that time.

You're gonna have, you know, your salmon flies, your caddis, your drakes. And a lot of fish looking up for those flies, golden stone flies, things like that. So June is usually, you know, a really good time to come fish this [00:24:00] river, especially on your own. 'cause it's gonna be very forgiving. There's gonna be bugs everywhere.

But other than that, you know, I really do think the shoulder seasons are really good. So spring and fall, fish really well on this river. Spring, you know, the fish are coming out of their winter doldrums and kind of getting, getting a little hungry again. And they basically will eat anything that moves.

They love the streamer bite in the spring. They love big flies attractors in the spring, you know, you could get away with throwing like a size six patch rubber leg or a size eight prince nymph in the springtime. So they, they really just are looking for food during the spring. And then in the fall, again, you know, this river's predominantly brown trout and I don't condone fishing for spawning fish at all.

But those fish are actively feeding again in the fall really well to kind of get ready for that spawn. And so they'll chase bug or you know, the chase streamers out of their feeding lines. They'll eat more attractor patterns again there in the fall, [00:25:00] just trying to beef up to get ready for that spawn.

**D. Roger Maves:** Yeah, yeah. So do you have, with the dam there, do you have a spring runoff? Is there.

**Presley Garcia:** Yeah,

**D. Roger Maves:** You know for the, the, okay.

**Presley Garcia:** Mm-hmm. Yeah. So we do, it really truly is a freestone river, even with that dam there. They really keep it at natural flows about 95% of the year, unless the farmers call for water. Which if they have the water outta the reservoir, then they would release.

But for the most part, the river is truly a, uh, not a tailwater. It is a freestone and fishes like such. So we'll end up having, you know, a spring runoff, usually late May, early June this year, it was a little early 'cause we had not that much snow and high water temp or high air temperatures this spring. So it was kind of, you know, May 20th, May 24th, somewhere in there. I can't remember the exact day where we peaked, but it was, you know, it was a little early. But generally speaking, it's like the first week of June is peak runoff. [00:26:00]

**D. Roger Maves:** Okay. Question, what water conditions or flows do you consider ideal for float or wade trips?

**Presley Garcia:** Yeah, so I always just, you know, general rule of thumb when wade fishing, air on the side of caution, you know, I know everybody wants to catch those fish, but I always tell people if you're depending on your experience level, I've wade fished this river at 2000 CFS in certain pockets, but I don't recommend that to everybody. So generally speaking about a thousand CFS down, you're at pretty safe flows to wade fish and feel comfortable walking in the river. The rocks on the river bottom are perfectly circular and they almost make you slip every single time. So make sure you have your footing, but I, I would say about a thousand down.

Preferably 600 down for most people is very comfortable. Walk wade fishing, if you're experienced, that can vary and be even higher cubic feet per second. We get a ton of [00:27:00] back eddie's and big eddie's where you could walk in year round basically, doesn't matter the flow. They're super slow. And then for flows as far as float fishing, we'll fish that river at peak runoff five years ago or so.

Peak runoff was huge and we flooded everywhere and we had like 8,000 cubic feet a second going through. And I'm a silly guy and I was out there fishing it with streamers and didn't have any luck 'cause it was completely blown out, but it was fishable. But yeah, we'll fish the river peak runoff and which is usually about 3000, 3,500 on good years.

All the way down to about, you know, 400, 300 range is where we kind of are like, all right, it's getting a little skinny in there to float.

**D. Roger Maves:** When I was down there, um, still there, Presley?

**Presley Garcia:** Yeah, I'm still here. Yeah. Yeah.

**D. Roger Maves:** Okay. Okay. When we were down there fishing a week or two ago, um, what was the CFS then? [00:28:00] Just to gimme an idea,

**Presley Garcia:** I believe the CFS yeah, I believe, I kind of remember the, I believe the CFS at Del Norte was at like 900 and up above South Fork closer to Creed at what we'd call wagon wheel gap. The flows were about seven fifty, seven hundred and fifty. And so I would say like optimal, like ideal flows. My ideal flows for me when we're fishing all summer long is probably around a thousand, around a thousand CFS for float fishing, and that's optimal for also wade fishing, but I really like it at about a thousand CFS for float fishing.

A few reasons why the fish kind of are still on the bank, but they also have moved into some of those other runs in the middle of the river. And you could always get a boat through about, at that time, pretty easily go over most of those rocks. So I really like it at about a thousand CFS 1500 to about a thousand.

**D. Roger Maves:** Mm-hmm. Okay. Okay. That makes sense. Yeah. We could have used another [00:29:00] six, eight inches of water in there.

**Presley Garcia:** Yeah. Yeah.

**D. Roger Maves:** Uh, to miss a few of those rocks. But, um,

**Presley Garcia:** Right.

**D. Roger Maves:** Yeah. Yeah. There's just a couple of areas there that were really tight, you know, especially when you don't know the river, you know?

**Presley Garcia:** Yeah.

**D. Roger Maves:** Everything's a surprise. Right,

**Presley Garcia:** Right.

**D. Roger Maves:** Uh, oh, we went the wrong way and we can't get over to the other side, so we just have to go for it. Right. So,

**Presley Garcia:** Yep.

**D. Roger Maves:** Yeah. Yeah. So, yeah, kind of tell us about how the, uh, the fishing changes from spring to fall, 'cause like you said, a lot of bugs in June and, you know, we were there. Yeah, mid-June and. Yeah, we were, you said that the stone flies had, uh, the salmon flies had stopped, but we were still seeing salmon flies when we were there.

**Presley Garcia:** Mm-hmm.

**D. Roger Maves:** And then a lot of big gray drakes, green drakes, that kind of thing. So, which was kind of fun to see all these big flies.

**Presley Garcia:** Yeah.

**D. Roger Maves:** Yeah. So if that's more, is that June [00:30:00] only or do you see a lot of hatches in May as well? And then how does that proceed? How do you change up your fishing as you go through the season?

**Presley Garcia:** Yeah. You know, starting in spring we generally, I like to fish streamers a lot slower retrieved streamers in the spring, but you definitely want a nymph in the spring time with, you know, big attractor patterns are kind of the ticket.

Then as we progress, you know, that's like a March, April type of thing. As we progress into May, the fish will still chase the streamer, but that's when we start getting our hatches.

We'll get like a little blue winged olive hatch and we'll get a good caddis hatch, however. You know, the fish don't really, they'll eat 'em, but they don't get keyed into 'em or turned onto 'em as much as other rivers like the Arkansas, where you could have a great blue wing day or a great caddis day.

You know, it's still sparse fishing on the dry flies in May. And then when June comes around, first or second week of June, I can't tell you the exact day, but it's somewhere between June 7th [00:31:00] and Father's Day every year, you know, June 7th, June 17th, somewhere in there, we'll end up

getting the salmon flies, and that's when it's really turned on to the, the dry fly fishing and the salmon flies will hatch and they'll generally start in the lower river, meaning closer to Del Norte, and the hatch will progressively work its way up river.

Um, so it'll work its way up from, you know, let's say June 5th is the start date. Randomly that's just a random date and it'll work its way up. All the way to Creed, past Creed through the Oxbow ranch and all that stuff. All the way up for the next three to four weeks. So when you were here, that's probably why you still saw the remnants of the hatch 'cause they were still working their way up. They had probably where you put in, they had just left, you know, maybe two or three days before.

**D. Roger Maves:** Right.

**Presley Garcia:** But yeah, so we'll get the salmon fly hatches and they'll progressively work their way up the river. And that's, yeah, like I said, generally like in the South Fork area is around June 7th to Father's [00:32:00] Day-ish.

And then um, that's the salmon fly hatch. And the fish will generally still be looking up even after our, you know, I haven't seen a salmon fly or I've seen one maybe all day long. The fish are still looking up 'cause they've just seen millions of those things flow by 'em. And they're a big meal so why not eat it?

So we'll get those salmon flies. And from about that point on, I'm generally. Fishing dry flies are a dry dropper until something tells me I need a switch. So after the salmon flies, I'll fish a dry dropper and I generally what I do is fish some form of a bigger may fly nymph, you know, so like a bigger Frenchy, a hot fly this summer was like a Duracell.

I've caught, you know, fish on jig, green drake nymphs, things like that because that's gonna be the next hatch, kind of in the progression, right? So those bugs are actively moving around and molting underneath the water surface. And so I'll fish will dry dropper, like a chubby down to one of those flies I just mentioned.[00:33:00]

And then we'll kind of intermittently get golden stone flies. And caddis still lingering around through that time. And then about June 20th-ish, somewhere in there, June 20th, we'll end up getting a variety of drakes, green drakes, brown drakes, gray drakes. And they'll, they'll hatch and come off. Like I said, intermittently, you're gonna have caddis and golden stones and yellow Sallys and things like that.

And then around the 4th of July generally is kind of when all of our big bugs are out of the system, right? All the big bugs have gone and hatched. So now we kind of tend to size down. So for instance, today, I know it's not the 4th of July, although it is coming up, we caught most of our fish on like a size 18 or 20 blue winged olive emerger.

And so we size down. So generally what happens is it's kind of a bell curve or an inverted bell curve of, of bug sizes, right in the spring,

**D. Roger Maves:** Okay.

**Presley Garcia:** You're gonna fish big bugs throughout, you know, the [00:34:00] month of June you're gonna fish big bugs, whether that's a a, a big stonefly or a big mayfly. And then, you know, July and August you're gonna kind of fish tinier bugs, um, underneath the surface.

You will get hopper eats here and there. But the more consistent stuff is gonna be underneath the surface in July and, and August. And so you're gonna size down your flies there, and then come September, October, you're gonna size back up your flies and uh, and show 'em more attractor patterns again there, you know, pats rubber leg, your prince nymphs, your brunches, uh, pheasant tails, hare's ears in, in bigger sizes, size 10 to 14.

Yeah. So that's kind of how the progression of the season goes.

**D. Roger Maves:** Okay. Okay, Joe, let's take a break here. It's a good time to take a break and, uh, come back and a couple questions on the salmon fly hatch. Uh, so

**Presley Garcia:** Yeah,

**D. Roger Maves:** We'll, uh, come back and talk about that in just a few seconds.

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You're listening to ask about fly fishing internet radio. We're talking with Presley Garcia about Colorado's Hidden Gem: The Rio Grande.

If you'd like to ask Presley a question, just go to our homepage, fill out that form and send it in. We will try to get your question answered on the show tonight, and let me just check, see here what we've got. Yeah, we took care of that one. Let's see.

All right, so. Yeah, some other questions kind of follow up on the salmon fly hatch you addressed when it happens, and let's talk about how you fish for it. And Joe in Colorado Springs was asking best time to book a flow trip. So you just told us about that, but how do you fish that? So that was, you know, somewhere in between the first three weeks, somewhere in there of June. Uh,

**Presley Garcia:** Right.

**D. Roger Maves:** What, how do you fish that? What's your methods? How do you rig up for fishing a salmon fly hatch?

**Presley Garcia:** Yeah. So kind of real quick, back to kind of Joe, and then I'll hop onto that with Joe. The best time to book a trip, being that you're in [00:37:00] Colorado Springs, or at least local, I always help people within, you know, Colorado, New Mexico. If they really want to catch this hatch, the best thing to do is to book like, you know, a Friday, the first week of June, a Friday the second week of June, and a Friday, the third week of June. And you're probably gonna catch it one of those days. However, you know, that's, that's a lot of trips. So I'm not trying to sell you on a trip. I'm just saying like, really. If by the time you hear the salmon flies have hatched, they're upstream, they've already moved on, they're going somewhere else. You know, they're kind of one of those things. It's like, unless you're fishing the river every single day, you kind of gotta get lucky,

To, to hit that hatch. So, um, the best way to do it, you know, Joe's in Colorado Springs book a trip if it's the weekend a Saturday, and then the next Saturday and then the next Saturday, and you'll probably catch it one of those days.

**D. Roger Maves:** Yeah,

**Presley Garcia:** But yeah, the way

**D. Roger Maves:** Makes sense.

**Presley Garcia:** The way we rig up and fish those salmon flies is a lot of the times those, uh, salmon flies are really water temperature dependent [00:38:00] and slow dependent.

And so, you know, this is another little tip here for Joe to kind of catch the salmon fly hatch after we hit peak runoff and the flows start to dip, not drop drastically, but start to dip. You can almost bank on three or four days after that dip. That's when the salmon flies are gonna hatch. When you see water temperatures averaging at about. 52 to 58 degrees, and they kind of consistently have been at that water temp, that's when those bugs are gonna hatch. And so what we do, because we're at high flows during that salmon fly hatch, the best way to fish it is from a boat because the fish are up against the banks because of the high flows, right?

They're pushed over to the bank, into the feeding lines on the bank because you get friction from the bottom of the river and friction from the bank. Kind of the only spots they could sit, without wasting too much energy. So they're right on the bank, which is good because the salmon flies are right on the bank as well in the willows mating and falling [00:39:00] into the river.

And so the way we fish this hatch is I generally like to throw either two x tapered leader or a three x tapered leader, seven and a half feet long. I know some people throw longer, but I think it turns over better on a shorter leader and one big salmon fly. The, the bug of choice around the Rocky Mountain West is probably a chubby Chernobyl.

I tie up my own salmon flies, you know, there's great salmon fly variations out there and you know, just different types of bugs. I think a lot of them will work, most of them will work. Our bugs tend to be pretty orange, although I think some of the flies get really overkill on orange, so I go like a tan in

orange fly, you know, just orange highlights on our flies. But the best, the way we fish 'em is just one dry fly as tight to the bank as you can.

From the bow, right on the bank. What I mean, as tight to the bank as you can. I don't think they're three feet off the bank. I think they're an inch [00:40:00] to a foot and a half, maybe at the most off the bank. They're right on that bank.

**D. Roger Maves:** Wow. Wow.

**Presley Garcia:** A lot of our banks are undercut, so the fish are underneath the bank and they'll look up and wait for that, bug to fall inches from the bank and then they'll come up and eat it. Um,

**D. Roger Maves:** Yeah.

**Presley Garcia:** Yeah. We fish one single dry fly actively during the hatch, and that's kind of the way we attack that bug.

**D. Roger Maves:** Yeah. Cool. Cool. Good tips. Good tips.

What about Terrestrials on the Rio Grande? I think you said earlier, you know, like in most Rocky Mountain fisheries we're looking at like, um, early September, late August, right? Is that the

**Presley Garcia:** Yeah.

**D. Roger Maves:** Way it is on the Rio Grande, Yeah.

**Presley Garcia:** Yeah. Yeah. We're kind of throwing hoppers and stuff like August, September time.

**D. Roger Maves:** Okay. Okay. Any other terrestrials work? Well, on the river? Beetles,

**Presley Garcia:** Um, I've fished some ant patterns, some bigger ant patterns. We don't get like the carpenter ants, the big, big ants that other rivers around us get, but I think it's just, you know, [00:41:00] an, uh, aggressive response from the trial and they'll come up and eat it.

But mostly hoppers for terrestrials and. That's pretty much the main ticket there for fishing terrestrials. And it's usually August. I'll start fishing some Terrestrials here in a couple weeks just because the water's low. But yeah, mostly in August and September, throwing hoppers is kind of the main one.

**D. Roger Maves:** Okay. Okay. What, what's your approach to matching the hatch on days when insects are sparse or it may be not matching the hatch and going a different direction? What, what do you do on those tough days and uh, things that don't seem to be happening?

**Presley Garcia:** Yeah, I mean, what a great example for this was today we started off nymphing because there wasn't any bugs out. I always say I love dry flies, but I'm not gonna force it if it's not there.



And then we had a little bit of drakes, I wouldn't say it was a ton of drakes happening today, but there was a little bit of drakes still [00:42:00] lingering around. And so we saw maybe one or two risers. And so we switched over to a dry fly.

And so, you know, the bug life was pretty sparse today. And we switched over to a dry fly and we had a few refusals. And the thing that I tend to do when the bug life is sparse and you're getting fish to turn away is sized down your bugs. So during the thick of the Drake hatch, I was fishing, you know, size 10, size 12 parachute adams or other Drake variations.

And today we were fishing like a size 14 and a size 16 trailing off of it. And we ended up tricking quite a bit of fish. Actually. We had about a good, you know, 30 minute rally where we had four or five fish eat a dry fly. And then we had another, you know, we got those ones to the end and then we had another three or four misses that we had in a 30 minute period because I sized down the flies there.

And, and they were actively feeding, um, some of the, on some of those Drake. You know, when the [00:43:00] bug life is sparse, I don't like to force the dry fly, but if I do see some risers, I recommend and you wanna catch a fish on the dry fly, I definitely recommend sizing down your flies.

**D. Roger Maves:** Okay. Okay. Even with the Drakes, you're saying go smaller

**Presley Garcia:** Even with the Drakes? Yeah. Something smaller. Yeah. Even with the Drakes size it down a little bit, I think the fish get less weary when it's a little bit smaller of a bug.

**D. Roger Maves:** Hmm. Okay. Okay. What rod weight and line setup do you use for most of the trips you run? Most of the float trips you run?

**Presley Garcia:** Yeah. Um, most of the trips I run we're your typical nine foot five weight.

I think a six weight definitely does help as well, especially during the salmon fly hatch when you're throwing those big bushy dry flies tight to the bank. But most guides on the river are fishing nine foot five weights with the occasional nine foot six weight during the season. And then we always have six or seven weights for our streamers.

**D. Roger Maves:** Okay. Okay. [00:44:00] You've mentioned a lot of patterns up to this point, but are there any local or custom patterns that are unique to the Rio that you'd recommend?

**Presley Garcia:** Yeah, I mean, there's not necessarily like a, I'm sure there's local patterns that people use daily. I think every single guide on the river has, there's specific fly that they tie, you know, that they don't tell anybody about and it's a lot of that.

But as far as like specific fly on the river that's home to the Rio Grande, I wouldn't say there's necessarily one. I think these fish definitely get keyed in on a certain bug and then if you could find that bug, you're gonna have a good day. But I typically like to fish. If I'm fishing subsurface Frenchies one, they're easy to tie and the fish eat 'em all the time.

The bug that kind of was fishing really good all summer long was the Duracell. And I think if it looks buggy and you put it in their face, they're probably going to eat it. And then if you could really get it to look like a [00:45:00] Drake or what they're actively feeding on, they're not gonna refuse anything at all.

So some of those, if you've heard of it, generally, it's a good one to throw on this river. They're not really specifically any custom or local ties.

Hello?

**D. Roger Maves:** Yeah, I'm here. Um,

**Presley Garcia:** Oh, sorry.

**D. Roger Maves:** It seems like, you know, when we go to a new river or something, stop in the fly shop and uh, and then there's always these, you know, four or five flies we've never seen before that are specific to, to the river, you know, and it's like, oh really? Come on now. But, uh,

**Presley Garcia:** Yeah.

**D. Roger Maves:** Yeah. I mean, I think my son got, when we were fishing, you know, we were, it was kinda like what you were talking about of, there was a few dries, but not much happened on top and. But cut a lot on the frenchies.

**Presley Garcia:** Yeah.

**D. Roger Maves:** Under, uh, yeah, so going deep and those worked quite well. And I think you had said, you know, anything that looked may fly-ish.

**Presley Garcia:** Mm-hmm.

**D. Roger Maves:** Go for it. And yeah, that seemed to work out, uh, pretty good with tungsten bead and [00:46:00] getting it down, down deep, so,

**Presley Garcia:** Yeah.

**D. Roger Maves:** Um, okay. So what are the advantages that you have floating versus wading on the Rio Grande?

**Presley Garcia:** Yeah, so I kind of, you know, when people ask me what kind of trip should they take, this is the analogy I use, when you're wade fishing, you get a thousand shots at that hole, right?

And you, you know, there might be 10 fish in that hole. And so you could sit there and really work and dissect that hole to catch as many of those fish in that specific hole as possible.

It's the complete opposite. When you're float fishing, you're probably gonna pass by a thousand holes and get one, maybe two shots at it if you're lucky.

So that's kind of the pros and cons to each, right? So if you're one of those guys that really likes to dissect the river and really wants to fish that hole or that specific fish, wade fishing is your way to go. If you want to see a bunch of different fish and put your flies in a bunch of different fish's face, float fishing is kind of the way to go. [00:47:00]

And so those are what I tell people on this river. There's so many different holes and there's so much fish that I think a lot of people opt for the float trips just flows. And the fact that you could pack your flies by so many different fish, you know, if that fish up there at that hole didn't want to eat this fly, well maybe Johnny down here is gonna want to eat it. So,

**D. Roger Maves:** Yeah. Yeah. You bring up some really good points though, because yeah, when you're wade fishing, you can, like you say, dissect that, run that hole, that seam, whatever. And if something didn't work, then you change up or you go deeper or you know,

**Presley Garcia:** Right.

**D. Roger Maves:** Until you try to get something. But when you're floating, what's one of the disadvantages of floating is that you may have just floated over a run that had a lot of fish in it, but you weren't deep enough.

Well, you don't get to go try it again.

**Presley Garcia:** Right.

**D. Roger Maves:** So it's, it's gone. So, uh, I never really thought about it that much, but it makes total sense.

**Presley Garcia:** Yeah.

**D. Roger Maves:** And I mean, you can change up on a float trip [00:48:00] and the river may have changed by the time you change up and it may be different, you know, fish may be in different spots and stuff, so. Yeah. Yeah.

**Presley Garcia:** Right.

**D. Roger Maves:** That's never easy, is it, Presley?

**Presley Garcia:** No, no, no. It's,

**D. Roger Maves:** It's never easy.

**Presley Garcia:** It's an ever changing thing. And you know, I would say a lot of times on float trips, you're making those kind of what I would call micro adjustments.

**D. Roger Maves:** Yeah.

**Presley Garcia:** You know, you're. You're lengthening your dropper to get a little bit deeper or you are shallowing it up to make it a little bit, you know, shallow or you're adding a third fly, you know, your dry dropper dropper, um, to see something else. You give the fish something else to look at. So you're making those constant, tiny adjustments that a hundred yards downstream won't make a difference. Right. Whereas when you're wade fishing, you could really like, you know, add a split shot at, take off a fly, do these different changes, and really pitch that hole.

**D. Roger Maves:** Yeah. Yeah, definitely. What [00:49:00] are some of your favorite floats on the river and, you know, maybe give us some timing on them too. This is a three hour float, a five hour float, it's a eight hour float, that kind of thing.

**Presley Garcia:** Yeah. So. There's a couple different floats. I really enjoy. I don't guide up high, like I said earlier, but I do enjoy floating what we call the oxbows.

And this is about six miles below the reservoir at, you know, what I would say is the first put in on the river at Texas Creek, put in and you float through the oxbows. And I really do enjoy that float. It's kind of a, uh, meandering meadowy stream, high Mountain Valley that you're kind of just overlooking breathtaking views.

So I enjoy fishing that kind of river on my own up there. And then when I'm guiding, I really enjoy what we would call the town run. And that's from 149 Bridge to County Road 19. [00:50:00]

Oh, and, excuse me, sorry. The oxbow float. It's an all dayer, it's gonna take you anywhere from six to 10 hours, depending on how many times you stop. It's a, it's a long float. It's about 15 miles to the nearest boat ramp.

But then the town run is about five and a half miles of river, and it's from 149 to County Road 19. It's basically through the town of South Forks, hence the name. And you know, depending on the flows, it's anywhere from a two hour float to about a five hour float, depending on, in high water during runoff. It's about two hours right now.

I mean, I could probably go run it, it'd be five hours, four and a half, five hours. So I like the town run as well, especially guiding it. It's a lot of different stuff to see. And then a little, another spot that's really tough to fish is from Hanna Lane down to Del Norte. And the reason it's, it's tough to fish, not that it's hard to fish, is there's a giant like 20 [00:51:00] foot dam canal diversion, you know, about a mile from Del Norte, the town of Del Norte, and you have to portage your boat. So the fishing's great down there. It's just you have to ported your boat. So, unless you got some big guys with you that are willing to pick up your boat or you got a really small boat that's easy to move around.

It's kind of float. Not many people do much of, but I really enjoy that float. There's a ton of good holding water down there for the fish and that's, you know, about seven miles of river and that's probably about anywhere from three to six hours, depending on flows.

**D. Roger Maves:** Kind of hard to take a hard boat over a portage like that if you had to. Right?

**Presley Garcia:** Yeah, yeah, definitely. I, I

**D. Roger Maves:** Seen a lot of big guys. A lot of big guys.

**Presley Garcia:** Yeah. A couple of guys I've seen, you know, I think I've heard of two people taking their drift boat down there and doing it. It, I would not, no, it's about 150 yard portage, and so you kind of want those lighter boats, [00:52:00] like a fly craft or something really small like that you could just kind of throw on your shoulder and run it around that dam.

**D. Roger Maves:** Yeah. Yeah, definitely. Yeah. Okay. Talk about how you manage your drifts, you know, and casting angles when fishing from a rafter drift boat, what do you do as a guide to position your fly fisher, you know?

**Presley Garcia:** Yeah.

**D. Roger Maves:** Uh, for the right cast or the right drift and, and that kind of thing. I think this can help out something to do it yourself floaters too,

**Presley Garcia:** Right.

**D. Roger Maves:** That struggle with that. Yeah.

**Presley Garcia:** Yeah. So it kind of is low dependent, but in really high water. You know, let's say during the salmon fly hatch, you want your anglers to fish down river at a 45 degree angle from the boat, if that makes sense. Kind of your traditional drift boat fishing. You're slamming the bank as tight as you can, but also leading the boat.

And the reason why is during high water. The boat is gonna beat the flies 99% of the time. It doesn't matter how hard your guide [00:53:00] is working, the river in the middle is gonna push him, and the river on the bank is gonna hold those flies in kind of one spot. So, yeah, during high water, you want to angle in front of the boat.

And even if your guide's working really hard, you're, you're gonna want to, you know, mend. And you're really gonna get a, you know, a, 20 foot drift right on the bank maybe. And then you're gonna have to pick up and put back down because the boat's gonna beat the flies down the river. And then as we get into lower flows, I generally tell my anglers to cast.

Straight out the side of the boat perpendicular with the boat. And what I like to do is row their drift, if that makes sense. So during low water, for instance, today if I wanted to, I could have back rowed up and we did, we back road and hit the same hole three or four times, or I could back row and the, the flies will beat the boat rather than the boat beating the flies during low water.

And so what I tell people to do is, you know, cast right out the side of the boat and I'll row us [00:54:00] with your drift. So it'll only slow us down enough. If I'm beating your flies, I'll speed us up if I'm going too slow for your flies, and I'll row your drift so that way you get a really long drift. And so that's kind of the way I like to fish.

So like I said, during high water, you definitely want to lead the boat a hare. And then during low water or average flows, depending on the Oarsman, you could cast right perpendicular right out the side of the boat and get a pretty good drift.

**D. Roger Maves:** Okay. Okay. Yeah, all makes sense. And let's see here.

What about streamer?

You talked about nymphing. What about when you're fishing streamers? What's your approach there for, what do you teach your clients to do? You know on

**Presley Garcia:** Yeah,

**D. Roger Maves:** We're gonna throw streamers. Yeah, go ahead.

**Presley Garcia:** Yeah, yeah. No, that's a different approach. I think even in, uh, low water, you want to angle it up or downstream you want to angle, you know, cast 45 degrees downstream and then throw a big mend to get [00:55:00] that streamer's head facing upstream.

And then, you know, you could run your retrieves. And the reason why is you want those fish swim up river. So you want that fish to kind of look like it's swimming across and up the river. So you gotta fish downstream of you a little bit. So that's how I have my clients fish. And then we vary our retrieves.

A lot of people like to do the strip, strip, strip, strip, strip, which works great, but. I think what works even better is like a jerk strip or a jig strip where you cast and then you jig your fly. You know, you mend get the fly oriented the right way, then you twitch your fly, undulate it back and forth, and then strip in the slack.

I think that works a lot better than the strip, strip strip type of action, just 'cause it gives the fly more movement. And so that's kind of what I coach my clients up to do when we're fishing streamers. Another thing to do is with streamers, you know, this is maybe for the DIY angler or the beginner getting into streamer fishing, is, [00:56:00] if you're fishing out of the boat streamer fishing the front angler. If they're, assuming both anglers are streamer fishing, the front angler will cast to the bank and then jig the fly. Don't even strip jig the fly four or five times. Swooping across the boat or the middle of the boat, if that makes sense. In front of the boat while the angler in the back does the opposite, he's gonna cast the bank and then jig, jig, jig three or four times sweeping his rod behind the boat.

And then that way you're, and then if, yeah, and then if you get a bite and you don't have to strip set, you just swoop like you do kind of a like, I guess I say swoop the line or swing the line. Keep giggling one more jig essentially. And to get fish that way. I had a pretty good day with some beginners, um, wanting to learn how to streamer fish, just giggling streamers off the bank.

**D. Roger Maves:** Mm-hmm. Okay. Okay, good. Let's take another quick break and then we will, uh, dig into some more questions. Plenty more to go here. So hang tight. We'll be right back.

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Okay. Let's just, uh, check in, see if we've got anything coming in. All right. You had mentioned earlier, I, I'm trying to see if there's anything that we missed here, but, uh, kinds of holding water that you look for for targeting big browns. You had mentioned the undercut banks at, uh, certain types of certain seasons.

Are there other areas that you look for for the larger browns?

**Presley Garcia:** Yeah. Yeah, so definitely during the high water season. You're looking for those undercut banks, those cut banks, and you're looking for overhanging willows on the edges there during the high water. The [00:59:00] fish will definitely take cover under those, you know, willows or brush that's overhanging in the river and feed heavily under there because they feel safe and protected from predators above like anglers, but also osprey and things like that.

So I like to target those areas for some of those bigger fish. In fact, the biggest brown I've caught to the boat this year was an A cut bank with willows lined up all against it and it was overhanging limbs and it was really tough to get a fly in. But we managed. So I like to target those areas during high water.

Now as the water level starts to drop, the fish move into what I would call like transitional zones, the slow water next to the fast water essentially, and they kind of move into those transitional feeding lines where they could sit in the slow water. Then move into that fast water to feed, and that's kind of as the water's dropping and the fish move out towards the middle of the river, I look for those transitional zones.

And then when you get to lower water later in the season, which [01:00:00] kind of right now just two or snow pack, the fish will then be feeding in one of two places. For the most part, they're either gonna be in the deepest hole below rocks. Sometimes we get rock weirs in this river and you know, it's like a six foot to 10 foot deep hole.

And the fish will be down in that hole, actively feeding in some of those deep rock weir structures. So I target those areas, or in the shallow riffles, I think the shallow riffles are really overlooked. In fact, today the first fish we hooked up on, we did not land it. It was roughly 18 inch brown trout, and it was holding in about, it was maybe a foot of water.

I would like to say it probably wasn't even a foot of water. Yeah. And you know, it wasn't even, yeah, maybe a foot of water and riffle faster moving water, but yeah, maybe about a foot of water. And we hooked into an 18 inch brown trout. So I'll target those two areas. As you know, the season progresses those deep, deep, [01:01:00] deep pockets and those shallow fast moving riffles.

**D. Roger Maves:** Yeah. You know, we've been talking a lot about browns, but there are rainbows in that river. And in fact, on our trip out there, the biggest fish that we caught was a rainbow.

**Presley Garcia:** Yeah.

**D. Roger Maves:** My son caught at the put in.

**Presley Garcia:** Oh, nice.

**D. Roger Maves:** Well I was trying to rig it, well I was trying to rig my rod up. He was fishing and he, uh, he caught, I don't know, it was an 18-20 inch rainbow.

And, um, we thought, oh, this is the first fish of the two days. And we thought, oh, this is really gonna be good. Yeah. Never, uh, discount the Put ins. Right?

**Presley Garcia:** Right. Oh, I call those fish boaties. 'cause they're boat ramp fishes and they're always there.

The boaties, they're always there.

Yeah.

**D. Roger Maves:** So what do you think the, uh, proportion, percentage wise, you know, of rainbows to browns are?

Um, or does it change up and down the river?

**Presley Garcia:** Yeah, it generally fluctuates, but I will say, you know, uh, it's predominantly brown [01:02:00] trout.

**D. Roger Maves:** Right.



**Presley Garcia:** The CPW last numbers I saw, which was like seven years ago when they electroshocks the river, it was like some 90% brown trout and 5% rainbows.

**D. Roger Maves:** Okay.

**Presley Garcia:** I've noticed a lot.

**D. Roger Maves:** So you get a big rainbow that

I was gonna say, you get a big rainbow. It's kind of special then, huh? Yeah.

**Presley Garcia:** Yeah. Exactly. Yeah. You know, I think people frown on rainbows and a lot of us guides get excited when we catch a rainbow. 'cause it's like, oh, there's finally a rainbow. It's something different. You know? It's not a brown trout.

**D. Roger Maves:** Yeah. Yeah.

**Presley Garcia:** But yeah, no, I think the last. Four years or so, I've noticed, you know, the rainbow trout population has increased a lot of it due to heavily stocking the river. But generally speaking, this is just generally speaking, and obviously you could attest to this, when you catch a rainbow, generally speaking, it is a bigger fish for the most part not always.

But it's generally a bigger fish because when they stock the rainbows, they died off during whirling disease and so they try to get 'em back going [01:03:00] and stuff. And so when they stock the rainbows, and I think a lot of them don't make it one, because the brown trout take all the good feeding lines and the brown trout are bullies.

Two, the rivers kind of a brown trout habitat river. So they're, you know, most of it's cut banks, slower moving water stuff that brown trout, like deep, deep, deep moving water stuff that brown trout like compared to the stuff rainbows like. And then also I think some of the bigger brown trouts. Eat those rainbows as they stock 'em.

So they stock 'em in at about eight to 10 inches and I think an 18 to 20 inch fish thinks of that as, oh, I eat one thing today and that's the only thing I have to eat and I'm good. So I think a lot of the rainbows get eaten. So when you catch a rainbow it is special because it's generally bigger. 'cause it's survived, it's generally healthier.

We caught a rainbow today that was probably a good 16 inches, but it was really fat and healthy and it fought really hard. It took us a while to get it in. So [01:04:00] yeah, the rainbows, when you do catch one, it is pretty special on the Rio Grande.

**D. Roger Maves:** Yeah. Yeah. Interesting. We did get a question here on the internet. I wanted to run by you. This is a Jeff in New Mexico, uh, not too far away. Have you noticed any significant changes in the timing, distribution, and or density of the major hatches, including stone flies, Drakes, caddis over the past 10 years or so? In your experience, how consistent, have these hatches been or do you see any trends looking forward?

Good question.

**Presley Garcia:** Yeah, that's a great question. Yeah, I think the salmon fly hatch as great as it is this year was really good. But like the last three years was very sparse and patchy, if you will. And I think some of that has to do with those salmon flies. The para California stone flies are a keynote species for river health, you know, the river's health, [01:05:00] right? And so, so are Drakes and things like that. And so a lot of times when we get some of these lost five to, you know, five years, we've had kind of more drought years than good years, you tend to see some of those, salmon fly nymphs not getting enough oxygen down there. And so that hatch has kind of slowed down a little bit in my experience.

But this year, you know, was really good, actually. It was really good. So the last two or three years prior, it was a little sparse, but it was really good. The Drakes kind of the opposite story, the last four or five years, they were unreal. Like fish just sipping them everywhere. And you could, you could hardly get your fly back in the water 'cause they'd eat it as second it hits.

Um, they're just everywhere. There's so many Drake. And this year they were very patchy, you know, very hit or miss and sparse and random at times, if you will. But, um, overall I think, um, the, the fishery and those bugs are actually doing really good. And I haven't seen too much like die [01:06:00] off or terrible, you know, four or five, six consecutive years of terrible hatches. You know, you're always gonna end up with maybe a year where the salmon flies aren't great or the Drakes aren't great, or the caddis aren't great.

**D. Roger Maves:** Right.

**Presley Garcia:** You know, and then you're always gonna end up with a year. Where it's like, oh my gosh, this is unreal. They're just all over the place. So, um, I haven't necessarily noticed a, a trend of like bug life going away, but it is definitely a concern of mine with some of the droughts we've had in the last five to 10 years.

**D. Roger Maves:** Okay. What are challenges that you see anglers typically facing when fishing the Rio Grande for the first time?

**Presley Garcia:** Yeah, that's a great question. I think some challenges that I think people have when they fish the Rio Grande for the first time is knowing where the fish are. And I always say that kind of separates some of the good fishermen from the great fishermen is finding the fish and patterning those fish, understanding where they're feeding, what they're feeding on and things [01:07:00] like that.

So I think a lot of people, you know, you'll show up to the river and you'll see bugs everywhere and you get really excited and just think it's gonna be a flop, a parachute adams out there and they'll eat it. At times it is that, there's a lot of times it is like that, but a lot of people struggle with finding the fish, finding out what they're eating, finding out what depth they're feeding it, or do they want that fly to skate and flutter.

A lot of times during the salmon fly hatch, if you dead drift that salmon fly, they're not gonna eat it. You kind of gotta twitch it a little bit. So different things like that, the little nuances that the river has

that just vary from other places, I think are what a lot of people struggle with for the first time fishing the river.

**D. Roger Maves:** Yeah. Yeah. And that's a lot of the challenges, you know, do it yourselves face when not with the guide, you know, the guide sees these patterns on a day-to-day basis and says, oh, well, you know, this worked yesterday, let's try it to again today, you know?

**Presley Garcia:** Right, right. Exactly.

**D. Roger Maves:** Whereas do it yourself. You haven't seen all these [01:08:00] things, right?

**Presley Garcia:** Right.

**D. Roger Maves:** You don't know what you don't know, as we say a lot of times with the situations, but yeah. Yeah. Let's see. We're getting close on time here. What was one of your most, whether it was by yourself or with the, or guiding, what was one of your most memorable days on the Rio Grande?

**Presley Garcia:** Yeah. Um, I have two memorable days actually.

You know, one of 'em was during the Drake Hatch and I was with my clients and it was a half day, and it was one of those days that I just explained where it's like, you cannot get your fly out there fast enough. There's Drakes everywhere and I'm, you know, I'm looking at the river and there's emergers everywhere.

There's the Drakes are emerging and there, there's bugs everywhere. And the fisher, it looks like the water's boiling. And we had a half day, not even a full day, we had a half day and I think we caught some 50 odd fish, if not more. It was just, you know, what you dream of when you think of fly fishing, it was just throw it out there and they're gonna eat it. Boom, boom, boom, boom, boom. It was great and a lot of [01:09:00] those fish were very healthy brown trout and some big rainbows. It was, it was a beautiful day, it was great, and it was only a half day.

So it was like, yeah, you know, it was like, wow. I mean, wow. Yeah. So it was great. And then I would say a, a memorable day for me on the Rio Grande as, as a, you know, just as an angler and not guiding out there was, you know, this summer act, I happened to catch a 22 inch brown trout myself during the salmon flies.

And it was kind of funny. One of my buddies, Jim, that I, that guides with us, he was fishing and he caught a 20 inch brown trout and we were getting close to the takeout and he's like, Hey, you fish the rest of the way you, he's like, you gotta beat that, beat that like, and he wasn't being arrogant or anything. He's like, try to beat it. Try to beat it. And I told him, I was like, I don't know if I could beat that.

And about five casts later, I caught a 22 inch brown trout. And, you know, the day was made, you know, he caught a 20 inch fish. I saw 20 inch fish on dry flies, you know, during the salmon fly hatch. It was amazing.

And, uh, I get home, I get home after that and I look at the photo of the fish that I took a [01:10:00] picture of, and I realized my client caught the same exact fish a year before. It's the same exact fish and he had grown two or three inches, you know, he was like, we tape measured him the year before at like 19 and three quarters. He was almost 20 inches and then he was right at 20 inches this year. And it was the same exact fish. All the spot patterns were all the same. The hype on him was all the same. The red adipose fin was all, it was the same exact fish. And so I sent him a picture of it and I was like, Hey, he grew and he just sent me a thumbs up. It was a good day that day.

**D. Roger Maves:** Yeah, sounds like it. Yeah. Sounds incredible. Um, what final tips would you offer to fly fishers planning their first trip to the Rio Grande?

**Presley Garcia:** Yeah, I would definitely, um, if you're gonna do a DIY trip, I definitely would consult with local fly shops, Wolf Creek Anglers, our boss does a great job. We don't typically hide information.

And so he's gonna tell you everything you need to know about fishing the area, what's happening right now, what's gonna work the best, where to fish, you know how to fish, are you gonna fish the riffles, things like that. We'll definitely [01:11:00] consult with the local fly shops and.

Also, if you're coming out to fish, the Rio Grande, you know, maybe with a guide or whatever, don't forget, this is the biggest thing I tell my clients all the time. Don't forget to look around because the fishing is great. But you know, the, the reason I think it's a hidden gem is because there's not that many people out there. And if you look around and see the beautiful, stunning views and, uh, the beautiful area and the fact that you're out there with miles and miles and miles between you and the next boat, it's just a beautiful place to be. It's unreal. So don't forget that it is fishing. Yes. But you're also in a beautiful place in the country and it's very enjoyable to be there.

**D. Roger Maves:** Yeah. Yeah. One final question, and I don't know that you have any knowledge of this at all, but Kevin in Norman, Oklahoma asked if you had any recommendations in the South Fork area for walk-in Alpine Lakes.

**Presley Garcia:** Yeah. Yeah. There is a ton. There's one lake in particular that has some really big fish. It's closer to Del Norte.[01:12:00]

I'm not gonna name it. 'cause a lot of guides are, they love it. And so I'm not gonna hot spot it a little bit, but there's a specific lake closer to Del Norte that has some big cutthroat in it. And then there's a ton, there's a few others really right there, close to South Fork where you hike in and go catch some cutthroat.

I will say that those high alpine lakes, the harder you work, I guess the more the reward is. So you know that one close to Del Norte, it's about a seven and a half mile hike in. There's others that are like two mile hikes in and things like that. But the harder you work, the bigger the fish are and the the nicer the scenery is and things like that.

But there's a ton of high alpine lake fishing in the South Fork area and the Creed area as well, that we have one that you don't even have to hike very far. It's Pogue Lake and it's high alpine, 11,000 feet, you know. Uh. Crater Lake, which you have to cross the Continental Divide, but it's like a four mile hike and there's Crystal Lake closer to Creed.

There's a ton, and you know, I'm leaving a lot out, but there's a ton of high Alpine Lakes.

**D. Roger Maves:** Yeah. Yeah.

**Presley Garcia:** If Kevin ever came to the South Fork area . [01:13:00] And we crossed paths. I would more than happy to tell 'em exactly the lake that's close to Del Norte, but I think you could find it if you do a little Google map view on that.

**D. Roger Maves:** Yeah. And uh, folks, if you're thinking about going to the area, and I'm definitely, uh, we just took our first trip down there and I'm definitely thinking about going back because there's a lot to do in the area. And I'm just go to southfork.org, southfork.org. It's the visitors center site. And they sent me out a free fishing map and a visitor's guide to the area for camping and hiking. And I'm just on a page now that says southfork.org/fish and it's listing Lakes reservoirs, ice fishing, salmon fly hatch. So they're real nice. Send it all out for free, send you a map for fishing, send you a visitor's guide. So I would check in there and ask for whatever they can send you and uh, that will help you out as well in the area. But beautiful area. Lots of [01:14:00] fun things to do there, including, we saw that one thing, I'd never seen this before, but I guess it's popular of these, uh, bicycle things on the railroad tracks.

**Presley Garcia:** Yeah. Rail bikes

**D. Roger Maves:** That go right up.

**Presley Garcia:** Yeah,

**D. Roger Maves:** Yeah. Rail bikes and you ride, you know, like tandem bikes up the railroad tracks and follow the river up. So you have this beautiful view of the river and everything. And so. Um, that was a fun thing to watch. Didn't get a chance to do it this time, but maybe next time.

Well, unfortunately Presley run out of time. Time to, uh, wrap it up here and, uh

**Presley Garcia:** Perfect.

**D. Roger Maves:** When we return, we're gonna give away a one year membership to Fly Fishers International and one year membership to Trout Unlimited, and also giving away a book courtesy of Stackpole Books. And, um, so we'll do that in just a minute.

The Bonefish and Tarpon Trust works very hard to safeguard the future of our beloved flats fisheries from protecting spawning sites threatened by unsustainable fishing pressure. To securing historic funding to restore Florida's Everglades and estuaries.

Thanks to their members, they've expanded their [01:15:00] conservation to The Bahamas, Belize, and Mexico. There's still much more work to be done, and they need your help with your support, they can ensure that the Flats fishery is healthy and sustainable now and for generations to come. Visit btt.org and become a member of the Bonefish and Tarpon Trust today. Again, that's btt.org.

Just a quick reminder to everyone before you leave the website tonight, please take a minute and give us your feedback about the show. You can find a link on our homepage in the section under tonight's show that said, what do you think of the show? Uh, just click on the link and leave your comments. We really appreciate it.

Now it's time to give away our prizes. The winners for our drawings are randomly selected from this show's registration database. And if you didn't register for tonight's show, earlier it's too late now, but make sure you do so for our next show so you don't miss out on a chance to, to win one of these great prizes we have to offer.

If you are one of the lucky winners, we'll contact you after the show so that we can collect your information and deliver the prize to use.

Now the first thing we're giving away is a [01:16:00] one year membership to Fly Fishers International. And to learn more about uh, FFI go to [flyfishersinternational.org](http://flyfishersinternational.org) and you can learn all about the organization. And if you don't win tonight, go ahead and join them. Anyway, it's a great organization to support and our winner for that is Matthew Beruman. Beruman, probably not pronouncing that right, but Matthew Burman in Colorado. So congrats to Matthew and you are now going to be a proud member of the Fly Fisheries International. So again, we'll reach out to you after the show.

And now we'll give away a membership to Trout Unlimited and our winner for that is Gregory Goff Goff, Gregory Goff in South Carolina. So again, congratulations, uh, Gregory, and, uh, I know you'll join your membership to Trout Unlimited as well, and again, if you wanna learn more about Trout Unlimit, go to [tu.org](http://tu.org), [tu.org](http://tu.org) and, uh, another fine organization to support.

And now we're going to give [01:17:00] away, okay, we, uh, just clearing my queue here. So the way we do this is I'm gonna ask a question, and if you're the first one to answer it correctly, then you'll win a book and I'll send you out a list of books to pick from, from, uh, Stackpole Books. So the question is.

What is, and you don't have to be exact with this, but uh, you gotta be close. What is the prime time to hit the salmon fly hatch on the Rio Grande? Prime Time to hit the salmon fly hatch on the Rio Grande?

So there we go. Um, that should be a pretty easy one, I think Presley, but we'll see some and let's see, takes a minute for them to hear the question. Okay. Looks like we've got the first one in here.

Salmon fly hatch, first three weeks of June. Is that close enough, Presley?

**Presley Garcia:** That's perfect. That's perfect. Yep.

**D. Roger Maves:** Yeah. Silas Gray in Joplin, [01:18:00] Missouri. Silas, a longtime listener, probably, maybe a forever listener.

**Presley Garcia:** Oh, that's awesome.

**D. Roger Maves:** Congrats. Yeah. I'm coming up on, uh, 20 years of doing this show, so, um,

**Presley Garcia:** Great. That's great.

**D. Roger Maves:** It's been a long run. Oh, Silas, Silas, send me your address, your shipping address so I can get that shipped out to you and we'll take care of you there. You can just do it in the same form there as, uh, you just answered the question. So congratulations and we will get you that list of books to pick from.

Well, Presley, thanks again so much for, um, being with us tonight and sharing your, a lot of information about fishing the Rio Grande in Colorado. And thanks for spending your time after a long day of fishing. I hope you get a good night's sleep now.

**Presley Garcia:** Yeah, no, thank you. You, I appreciate it. The only way to close out a long day of guiding is to, uh, then talk about the long day of guiding, so that's, its perfect way to end my day.

**D. Roger Maves:** Okay, good, good. Well, thanks so much. [01:19:00]

Hopefully all of you have found the podcast archive on our website. If you haven't, just look for the link on the top line menu. In the archive, you'll find all your past shows over 390, I'm sorry, over 420 shows, I think right now. And, uh, you can search by keyword, keyword phrase like Trout, Tarpon, Madison River and so on.

So go ahead and explore. I think you'll be pleasantly surprised about what you'll find there. And our next broadcast will be on. July 16th, 7:00 PM Mountain 9:00 PM Eastern Time, and that show will interview Ian Davis and our show will be A Passion for Bonefish.

Get ready to explore the shimmering world of bonefish with Ian Davis, author of A Passion for Bonefish. Just published. Ian shares insights from how to read a flat and choose the perfect flight, unlocking the secrets of tide, moon phases, and guide teamwork.

Whether you're dreaming of stocking the flats or planning your next saltwater trip, the show will fuel your obsession for one of fly fishings, mostly [01:20:00] electric flying and elusive species.

Be sure to add this upcoming show to your calendar. Just click on that, add the calendar button below Ian's photo on our homepage, and you'll be all set. Can add it to your calendar.

I'd like to thank Fly Fishers International, Trout Unlimited, Bonefish and Tarpon Trust, Olympic Peninsula Skagit Tactics, The Ugly Bug Fly Shop and Water Master for sponsoring our show tonight.

Don't forget to visit our website at [askaboutflyfishing.com](http://askaboutflyfishing.com) and make sure you're signed up to receive our announcements so you don't miss out on any of our future broadcast.

Thanks for listening to Ask About Fly Fishing Internet Radio. We hope you enjoyed the show. That's it. Goodnight everyone and good fishing.