

Alabama's Best Fly Fishing

With Matt Lewis

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 Matt Lewis and he'll be answering your questions on Alabama's Best Fly Fishing.

This show will be 90 minutes of length and we're broadcasting live over the internet. If you'd like to ask Matt a question, just go to our homepage at 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 if 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.

You can also find it on any of the podcast sites like Apple Podcast, Spotify, PocketCasts, or wherever you listen to your podcasts. So if you have to leave early, you can return to our website or any of the podcast [00:01:00] platforms at your convenience. Listen to the recording at any time if you're out and about on Facebook, Instagram or X, which you're appreciated if you'd share our podcast. And when you do use, uh, hashtag ask about fly fishing and hashtag fly fishing. In fact, if you have a moment, do it right now while you're watching the show. That would be great.

The content of this podcast is copyright is the property of The Knowledge Group Inc. doing businesses ask about fly fishing. When we return, we'll be talking with Matt Lewis about Alabama's Best Fly Fishing

Water Master is dedicated to providing their customers with the highest quality inflatables on the market, as well as unbeatable customer service and product support. They're best known for their signature products, the Water Master Grizzly, Kodiak and Bruin Rafts.

These rafts are lightweight, compact, durable, versatile, and safe. The Water Master rafts are everything your personal watercrafts should be. They have been used by anglers and hunters all over the world. Visit Water Master today and take a look at the ultimate personal flotation craft.

[00:02:00] Go to bigskyinflatables.com. Again, that's bigskyinflatables.com.

Before we introduce Matt, I'd like to let you know about the great prizes we have to give away tonight. Our drawing tonight will 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, and look for the link under tonight's section that says, register for our free drawing. Click on the link and fill out the form, and we'll announce winners at the end of the show.

We'll also be giving away a copy of Matt's book, Alabama's Best Fly Fishing courtesy of Stackpole books. Learn more about Stackpole and the books that they publish. You can go to stackpolebooks.com. We're also featuring Matt's books, both this one and Redeye Bass fishing book on our website. Just look in the right hand column and you can get links to where you can order it there.

So here's how you can win Matt's book. You must be the first person to answer the question I ask at the end of the show. [00:03:00] Question will be about something that Matt and I talk about during the show, and you must submit your answer along with your name and location using the text box on our homepage. So listen closely and use your best typing skills. Take notes and pay close attention, and maybe you'll be the proud winner of Matt's book, Alabama's Best Fly Fishing.

Our guest tonight is Matt Lewis. Matt is an assistant professor of conservation biology at Lincoln Memorial University specializing in genetics and fishery science. He is the author of Alabama's Best Fly Fishing and Fly Fishing for Redeye Bass.

Matt has also written for magazines including The FlyFish Journal, Backcountry Hunters and Anglers, and American Fly Fishing. Matt combines years of exploring Alabama's waters with scientific expertise and practical fishing knowledge to create the definitive guide to Alabama's status as America's Amazon for fly fishing diversity.

Matt, welcome to Ask About Fly Fishing Internet [00:04:00] Radio.

Matt Lewis: Thanks. I appreciate you having me on.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah, good to have you. So, um, yeah, I was gonna ask you about the book, but you know, in your bio we talked about America's Amazon and tell you, looking through your book, there is a lot of diversity in Alabama. So I'm hoping we can at least touch on much of that tonight, but so

Matt Lewis: Oh, definitely.

D. Roger Maves: What ins, yeah. What inspired you to write Alabama's Best Fly Fishing and, you know, showcase the state as a fly fishing destination?

Matt Lewis: Yeah, there's probably multiple answers to that question, but the overarching. Reason that I decided to write that book obviously was after I had written my book Fly Fishing for Redeye Bass, which I had essentially written because, you know, this was a sport fish that not many people knew about.

There weren't many scientific studies done on this fish, but yet there were a lot of conservation concerns and questions and [00:05:00] things that we didn't know and we needed to know in order to make sure that we can protect those fish for future generations. And I kind of disguised the book as a more of a, a cry for help for among anglers to, Hey, we need to care about these types of things, otherwise they're gonna disappear.

And it was kind of disguised as a how to fly fishing book, but it was very much a conservation book and a celebration of a species and or a group of species now. And so with the Alabama's Best Fly Fishing it, I really just kind of wanted to take that same model but broaden it out to include a lot of

the different waterways in Alabama, especially even the Gulf region down there where, you know, being a scientist, I start to learn about some of the disturbances and things we've had that have impacted our natural world.[00:06:00]

And I see how they're affecting fisheries and I've studied how they've affected fisheries. And so it's really just, I wanna open the eyes of anglers that, yeah, it's great to care about the pebble mine in Alaska and all these other things, but there's a lot of things happening in the deep South that many people don't know about because it involves fisheries that maybe they don't necessarily pursue or have a relationship with.

And my goal was to kind of forge that relationship or create that curiosity so that more people are aware of these special places that Alabama has and hopefully will be willing to protect them. So essentially kind of creating stewards for the resources.

D. Roger Maves: Right, right. Yeah. I mean, to tell you the truth, Alabama was, you know, like never on my radar.

I mean, we all, yeah, yeah. You know, I mean, we all think about, oh, the Western states, you know, [00:07:00] Montana.

Matt Lewis: Mm-hmm.

D. Roger Maves: Wyoming, Colorado, and Mexico. Then we start the East Pennsylvania, but Florida. But yeah, people just don't talk about Alabama as a destination, and yet it seemingly has so much to offer.

Matt Lewis: Mm-hmm.

D. Roger Maves: And I'm glad you're concerned about, you know, the Conserva, well, that's kind of your sweet spot, is the conservation issues, right? I mean, that's as far as your studies at the university and so forth. So I can see why that, you know, was a great concern for you. So why did you term it as the Amazon?

Matt Lewis: Yeah,.

D. Roger Maves: In your bio? Yeah.

Matt Lewis: Yeah. So I, you know, it certainly, I mean, I didn't coin that term. There's been volumes written about Alabama and the fresh water and just aquatic biodiversity that the state has. And there's a lot of reasons for, for why that exists that we could certainly get [00:08:00] into if you want to. But really there is just a ton of water. There's a ton of different habitats in Alabama due to the, the geological formations underlying many of these different river systems that impart all these different chemical properties to the waters and actual physical properties to the waterways. And so.

That's just allowed for a lot of speciation and diversity to occur, and Alabama just is kind of at the heart of all of that. And so we like to think of game fish, right? As anglers, we like to think about things we can actually catch. But if you just look outside of that a little bit, whether we're talking

about crayfish or turtle species or shellfish, mussels, all those aquatic biodiversity categories or groups of animals that you can have, Alabama is near the top, if not the [00:09:00] top, not only in the country, but in the world.

D. Roger Maves: Wow.

Matt Lewis: And so that's why it's often kind of given that moniker America's Amazon, just because there is so many species found within the borders of Alabama.

D. Roger Maves: And is it diversity that makes it kind of the hidden gem of the fly fishing world, or is it something else?

Matt Lewis: Um, I think that's certainly part of it because that, you know, just like there's a lot of other species, there's also a lot of species of game fish.

I think fly fishing has undergone a little bit of identity crisis over the last couple of decades in a good way where people are starting to realize that starting fly fishing doesn't always mean trout. It doesn't always mean that you're pursuing trout.

D. Roger Maves: Oh, right. Yeah.

Matt Lewis: And it's especially seeing the growth in the pursuit of a lot of different warm water fish and you're starting to see, you know, gear and tackle being marketed towards those [00:10:00] particular species more and more.

I mean, if you've been following fly fishing, you can see that change that's happened in the last decade or so, and so Alabama's kind of a sweet spot for that kind of thing, whether it's salt water or warm water, there's a multitude of things that you can fly fish for. And I think. As we redefine what is fly fishing for a lot of people it's accessible.

So I think that's a big thing. There's a lot of people that live in Alabama that think you have to go to Colorado or Montana or Wyoming in order to fly fish because that's where the trout are, and you can certainly do that, right? There's a lot of people that do, but you can also go fly fishing in your own backyard and so,

D. Roger Maves: Oh, sure.

Matt Lewis: I feel like it's kind of reducing the barrier of entry to the sport for a lot of people because it is so accessible. You don't need all this complex gear and things that you might need to [00:11:00] pursue trout. You can just take a popper and a fly rod and go catch fish. You don't have to have float and all these vests with pockets full of things. It can be very simplistic.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah.

Matt Lewis: So I think for all those reasons, it's, it really is kind of the. I don't know. The diamond in the rough maybe.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah. Yeah. Well, it's funny because, you know, I mean, I live in Colorado and I first started fly fishing in Colorado, but the first fish I ever caught on a fly, and it was, I remember it, it was a mosquito fly. I tied it and I caught a largemouth bass on a farmer's pond. There you go.

Matt Lewis: Nice. Yeah, that's probably the first fish, either that or a blue gill for most people.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah, yeah. Because, um, it was right up from of the house and we just, my buddy and I would go up there at night and dusk, you know, and wade out with no waders, start shorts and t-shirts

Matt Lewis: Mm-hmm.

D. Roger Maves: And into [00:12:00] the lake and yeah. That's a good way to get, you know, and it's like you say, it can be easier, especially for kids and stuff to get started and, uh

Matt Lewis: Oh, absolutely.

D. Roger Maves: I mean, I've got a lake here by the house in Colorado that has trout and I take my grandkids down there, but. They don't have a lot of patience, you know?

Matt Lewis: No.

D. Roger Maves: If they're not catching, they're losing interest real fast. So, um,

Matt Lewis: Yeah,

D. Roger Maves: Yeah, yeah.

Matt Lewis: That's a couple.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah, go ahead.

Matt Lewis: Just real quick, because there's a couple things I forgot to tell that I just thought of. Um,

D. Roger Maves: Okay.

Matt Lewis: That's another thing that makes it great, like with warm water fishing, typically the catch rates and things like that are maybe a little bit higher, so it does keep people, you know, that maybe have shorter attention spans, a little bit more engaged.

D. Roger Maves: Mm-hmm.

Matt Lewis: And it's also pleasant year round. You can fly fish in a state like Alabama, there's not, like, you don't have to worry about snow typically or anything like that. So the waters are accessible year round and it's, [00:13:00] it's especially nice in the summer, especially when you can wade some of the, the cooler upland streams.

Just wet wade because it's brutally hot in Alabama in the summers with high humidity. But you know, a lot of these waters are spring fed and things like that, so it, it's comfortable to wet wade

D. Roger Maves: Mm-hmm.

Matt Lewis: And kind of a little bit of a reprieve from the, the summer heat. So that's also nice about it.

D. Roger Maves: Right, right. How would you describe the diversity of Alabama's fisheries compared to the other states around you in the south there, you know, Mississippi, Georgia, um,

Matt Lewis: Yeah, so if we're talking just game fish, Georgia and Alabama, or I think there may be like one, maybe one species of bass that Georgia has over Alabama, and that's partly because Alabama basically lost one of their species due to extra patient of bass that they used to have, but they don't really have anymore.

D. Roger Maves: Mm.

Matt Lewis: [00:14:00] Tennessee is. Also an incredibly species state when we're talking about fish, but not so much game fish relative to Alabama. So Alabama definitely has way more bass species, and a large part of that in Alabama, again, is due to the four different species of just redeye bass that exist across Alabama. Then you've got smallmouth and North Alabama, you've got Alabama bass, you've got largemouth bass, you've got the spotted bass. There's the Choctaw bass in southern Alabama. That's still undescribed, but certainly considered by science to be a unique species.

D. Roger Maves: Wow.

Matt Lewis: There's just a, there's a lot of diversity just in bass now.

D. Roger Maves: Bass, yeah.

Matt Lewis: You step outside of that and there's, you know, exponentially goes up.

D. Roger Maves: Let's talk about Alabama's redeye bass. What makes this species so unique and special for fly anglers [00:15:00] and just as a species itself, because you wrote a whole book on it. So tell us about that fish.

Matt Lewis: Sure. Yeah. We could talk 90 minutes on just this, 'cause this is my favorite subject, but so, so the redeye bass is for a lot of folks that maybe have never heard of them before, which is common because they're called redeye bass.

Immediately, that causes some confusion with people because people refer to a type of pan fish that's commonly called a rock bass. People will refer to those as redeyes a lot, even redeye bass sometimes, depending on what part of the country you're in. And so when I talk about fly fishing for redeye bass or redeye bass, that's what a lot of people gravitate towards, and I'm like, no.

I know it's confusing. Common names have made things hard, but. The redeye basses are actually a group of species in the black bass genus. So my crop is,

D. Roger Maves: [00:16:00] Okay.

Matt Lewis: Same thing as largemouth, smallmouth, all these, you know, different species of bass that we might be mostly familiar with. Redeye bass are just another species of those.

And the reason most people don't know about them is that they are native to just a handful of river systems in the southeastern United States. And so in Alabama, those are the mobile basin population. So that is the Coosa River, the Tallapoosa River, the Cahaba River, and the Black Warrior River. Each one of those four river systems has its own species of redeye bass. It's not subspecies.

D. Roger Maves: Oh, wow.

Matt Lewis: Like when people talk about different cutthroat. Trout, anything like that. It's a truly a different species, and you can look at them and tell, I can look at a redeye bass and tell you which one it is. So they're [00:17:00] diagnostic just from visible characteristics, but also there's been genetic studies and things like that, that have flipped those things up. So if you believe that a largemouth bass is different than a smallmouth bass, which most people would, you have to also accept that a coosa bass is different than a tallapoosa bass when we're talking about redeye basses. So that's in Alabama. If we move over into Georgia, and Georgia has the headwaters of the Tallapoosa and Coosa River, so they also have smaller populations of those two species of redeye bass.

And then Georgia also has the Altamaha bass, which is fresh off the press described species just about a week ago.

And so that was one of the last two remaining species of redeye bass that had not been formally described. So the Altamaha bass is native to the Altamaha River system in Georgia. Georgia [00:18:00] also has the Chattahoochee bass, which is the redeye bass, native to the Chattahoochee River system.

Probably one of the more beautiful redeye bass species because that has these really, you know, bright red colored fins. And then, you've got the Bartram's bass, which are also one of the newly described about a week ago species of redeye bass. So seven total species of redeye bass throughout the southeast, each native to a certain river system.

The Bartram's bass is native to the Savannah River system shared between South Carolina and Georgia, and I think North Carolina has a slight bit of claim to that river system as well. But those are all the redeye basses. So they're limited to just a few states and

D. Roger Maves: Mm-hmm.

Matt Lewis: Not only are they just in a few states, but they're only in the Upland river systems of those river systems in those states. [00:19:00]

So you have to get to the higher elevation. Rockier, more shoal. Think of brook trout water. That's the type of water that redeye bass live in. So these very clear, very rocky waterfalls, you know, just beautiful picturesque mountain streams. That's where these bass live. That's where they're native.

And these are streams that a lot of people, I mean, yeah, they swim in 'em, they stand on these overlooks and look down at the waterfalls and take pictures and things like that. But people weren't fishing them because you just assume nothing's in there. But in fact it's home to these beautiful little bass

D. Roger Maves: And how

Matt Lewis: So?

D. Roger Maves: Yeah, I mean, I'm looking at a picture in your book, uh

Matt Lewis: Mm-hmm.

D. Roger Maves: You show somebody casting and surrounded by Mountain Laurel and full bloom. Yeah. And it looks like just be a trout stream. I mean,

Matt Lewis: Alright.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah.

Matt Lewis: I mean that's what I, yeah, [00:20:00] that's what I use to like, you know, kind of qualify it for people that are unaware. I'm like, think of a trout stream and I hate to qualify it like that 'cause it's not a trout stream, it's a redeye bass stream, but

D. Roger Maves: Right. Yeah.

Matt Lewis: If you think about that type of water and, uh, water clarity and rocky habitat and things like that, that's the flow. You know, there's usually at least a moderate flow, you know, that's redeye bass water.

So it's just, you know, it's hard to find relative to something like a largemouth or smallmouth. And you have to travel, you know, essentially to the southeast to catch 'em. It's not something that. Has really been affected by man in the sense that it's not one that we've moved all over the place. It still exists where it belongs and where it's native. Now there are,

D. Roger Maves: Right,

Matt Lewis: As I've learned and done some, some research describing some populations of redeye bass that have been introduced across [00:21:00] the country. So there's a population in the Upper Verde River system of Arizona, and there's a population in some of the Foothill Mountains of California, and there's even some populations in Tennessee that are in the Cumberland Plateau area where they've been introduced.

Now, some of these were on purpose because they thought, you know, Hey, more fish is a good thing, right? Let's put enough a new species in here and see what happens. In the case of Arizona, they thought they were stocking smallmouth, and I think they were just misidentified. So honestly, just until, I believe it was 2020, or it might have been 2019, somewhere in that area, I was sent a picture of a redeye bass from the Upper Verde River system and someone sent it to me because I had written the book on redeye bass and they're like, Hey, is this one of those fish that you wrote, wrote [00:22:00] the book about?

And I said, uh, yeah it is. Where'd you catch it? And I thought maybe they'd come to Alabama and caught it and you know, just wanted to experience it. And they said, well, I caught it in the, the Upper Verde River system of Arizona. And I immediately was like, ah, I don't know about that.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah. Yeah.

Matt Lewis: And so in long story short, I got in touch with Arizona Game and Fish.

They connected me to a professor at a university that was already kind of trying to figure out what they had in those rivers. I told 'em, I'm like, look, that's a coosa bass. That's a redeye bass from the Coosa River system of Alabama. I don't know why in the world it's in Arizona, but that's what that is.

And they're like, really? Well that makes sense. That's why we haven't been able to identify it with all the genetic techniques we've been using for smallmouth identification.

D. Roger Maves: Ah,

Matt Lewis: Yeah.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah, right.

Matt Lewis: It's not a smallmouth. And so we published a paper on it. [00:23:00] Uh

D. Roger Maves: Oh, interest. That's really interesting. Yeah.

Matt Lewis: Yeah. So that was kind of cool. I was able to go out there and actually catch redeye bass in the Upper Verde River system. 'cause I went out to give a talk as part of that kind of collaboration that we were working on. So I have to say that redeye bass do exist in places outside their native range, but for the most part it's a native fishery in the southeastern United States.

And it's just in an area where these fish don't get big. Right. So. A large redeye bass would be 10, 11, 12 inches would be like trophy max. That's about as big as they get.

D. Roger Maves: Okay. Okay.

Matt Lewis: And so they're overlooked by a lot of anglers. Right? Because a lot of people want big fish and these fish don't get big. So I think there's all those things

D. Roger Maves: That's, that's called the, yeah, go ahead. Finish that, finish your thought.

Matt Lewis: I was just gonna say, all those things

D. Roger Maves: Lets take a break right after that.

Matt Lewis: I think people have kind of looked over a little bit.

D. Roger Maves: Right, right. Well let's [00:24:00] take a quick break here, Matt, and come back and we'll finish a few more things on redeye and talk about the other bass that are

Matt Lewis: Sure.

D. Roger Maves: In Alabama.

The Ugly Bug Fly Shop in Casper, Wyoming has been serving fly fishers in Wyoming and around the world since 1983. Their selection of top of the line gear and a huge assortment of flies is one of the best in the land. All products are available in their fly shop and online looking for advice. Just give them a call and their expert professional staff will help you with whatever you need. Visit Ugly Bug Fly Shop today at uglybugflyshop.com, or you can call them at (866) 845-9284. Again, it's the uglybugflyshop.com. Or call them at (866) 845-9284.

You're listening to Ask About Fly Fishing Internet Radio. We're talking with Matt Lewis about Alabama's Best Fly Fishing.

If you'd like to ask Matt a question, just go to our homepage at askaboutflyfishing.com and [00:25:00] use that 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.

So Matt, I always ask my guests, you know, what's going on in your fly fishing world? I know you just finished this book, which is a book is always a major, major task for the author.

Matt Lewis: Yeah.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah. So what's happening?

Matt Lewis: Well, all kinds of things. I'm lucky enough to where my professional world and my personal world kind of are intertwined.

So I just recently got back from San Antonio, Texas for American Fishery Society National Conference, which was also. The host of the Black Bass Symposium, which is something that happens every 15 years. And so that happened to happen this year in San Antonio. So while I was out there, I was able to go fly fishing for Guadalupe Bass, which is a native bass.

D. Roger Maves: Oh yeah.

Matt Lewis: Pandemic to Texas. So that was cool. I was able to kind of, I'd never caught one before, so I was able to do that. But I also, [00:26:00] uh, was able to catch a Rio cichlid, you know, just experience fly fishing in a totally different landscape in the Texas Hill country that I've never done before. And it was absolutely amazing.

I want to go back for a dedicated fishing trip rather than a work conference type trip. But yeah, other than that, you know, being a college professor, it's, uh, not a lot of time right now we're starting out

D. Roger Maves: Not a lot of time. Yeah.

Matt Lewis: Kicking off the year.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah. Yeah. Now, did you fish the Guadalupe River? Is that what you

Matt Lewis: I did not. I fished the South Llano River.

D. Roger Maves: Okay. Okay. Just wondering if you had been out there before the floods rather than after the flood.

Matt Lewis: That was, this was the first time I'd ever been to Texas, but we did drive over the Guadalupe River. You could certainly see, you know, a lot of brush piles and kind of the big trucks that had been kind of consolidating a lot of that debris as part of the cleanup efforts. So, I mean, you could [00:27:00] see signs of what happened, but the river was certainly

D. Roger Maves: Yeah.

Matt Lewis: Backed down to kind of normal

D. Roger Maves: Back down

Matt Lewis: Levels.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah, yeah. Yeah. I've never been down to the hill country, but I hear it's beautiful. And Steve Ramez, you know, talks about a lot in his books

Matt Lewis: Mm-hmm.

D. Roger Maves: About that area. So, um, yeah. Heard it's beautiful. Um,

Matt Lewis: Yeah, I was able to meet up, Steve and I went to lunch while I was there.

D. Roger Maves: Oh, nice.

Matt Lewis: We had been talking for a while. About meeting up and, 'cause he still is interested in, you know, fishing for redeye bass with me someday. And I was able to finally meet him in person, which was a really cool experience because I have, you know, just about all of his books.

I think I have one more to buy, but really, you know, really love the way that he writes about native fish and how we should treat the world.

D. Roger Maves: Right, right. Yes, yes. Very good writer. Yeah, I've interviewed him several times on the show here. Yeah. Great. Great guy. Going back to, did you say it was New Mexico or Arizona [00:28:00] that you, that there was

Matt Lewis: Arizona.

D. Roger Maves: Arizona. What kind of river was that? I mean, from a western standpoint, was it higher altitude considering what the redeye bass need? Just trying to picture that.

Matt Lewis: Yeah, it was higher altitude. I mean there were a lot of, you know, hills in the area. The odd thing to me was that it was all kind of scrub brush.

Covered hills and a lot of obviously dirt, sand, cacti.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah.

Matt Lewis: Almost like an alien landscape from what I'm used to seeing. You know, when I catch redeye bass.

D. Roger Maves: Right.

Matt Lewis: But this was just north of Prescott, Arizona. And so that's kind of in, you know, the mountainous area.

D. Roger Maves: Right.

Matt Lewis: So the upper verde system is just above that, and so it is mountainous upland type waters.

D. Roger Maves: Mm-hmm.

Matt Lewis: They were definitely rocks present and some waterfalls and [00:29:00] things like that. So the stream itself looked very similar to what those fish have evolved to be in.

D. Roger Maves: Okay.

Matt Lewis: Just a different area.

D. Roger Maves: And they were reproducing on their own there.

Matt Lewis: Reproducing on their own, causing a lot of issues.

D. Roger Maves: Got it.

Matt Lewis: Mostly eating all of the native like sucker species and things that, that belong in that creek, in that river system.

You know, that's one of the reasons why they're great fly fishing target, because they're voracious eaters. I mean, they

D. Roger Maves: Mm-hmm.

Matt Lewis: It seems like they're never satiated and so they see that they're reckless abandon oftentimes, and that can wreak havoc if they get into the wrong place. And same things happening in California where they're, you know, I think they've wiped out a couple of species of native frogs on some of the river systems there, where they've been introduced.

You know, they're hungry. Little critters.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah. Yeah. [00:30:00] And every time it seems like we mess with nature, you know, things get a little wacky. Right. I mean, it's,

Matt Lewis: Yeah.

D. Roger Maves: I just was reading, this is totally off the subject, but I just finished, I've been subscriber to National Geographic my whole life, and I read 'em cover to cover every month because I just learn about all these things in the world that they were talking about tortoises, you know, Galapagos tortoises and how

Matt Lewis: Mm-hmm.

D. Roger Maves: Some of those have disappeared and stuff, but I didn't, one thing I knew about the tortoises, but back then they, um, they took the tortoises and the whaling ships, they would take those tortoises and stack them up in the hold of the ship, upside down, and for food.

Matt Lewis: Oh, wow.

D. Roger Maves: And a tortoise can live up to a year with no food.

And so they'd stack 'em up like. You know, just like boxes of food, so to speak. And they would supply their meat for a whole, you know, whaling trip out into the Pacific. But I never, [00:31:00] never had considered how that, and of course, because they were doing this kind of stuff is why some of these disappeared.

Matt Lewis: Right, right. Yeah.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah. But that was something totally new to me, but my God, I hadn't even thought of that.

Matt Lewis: No, I've never heard that.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah. Yeah. Very interesting. Anyway, it doesn't have to do with redeye bass, but no, um, I had to share that with somebody. I hadn't shared anybody, you know, today, so I had shared it, like,

Matt Lewis: Yeah, it it's related in a way.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah. Yeah. So you said that, you know, they're voracious eaters. What do you use to, you know, as far as flies and methods to catch them?

Matt Lewis: So if you ask other people, you may get different answers. If you ask me, it's, I'm gonna say number one, hands down, top water. That's usually

D. Roger Maves: Top water.

Matt Lewis: Nine times out of 10, that's poppers.

Whether that's deer hair type, stacked deer hair poppers, or whether it's cork poppers, foam poppers, it doesn't really [00:32:00] matter. I always kind of joke that if you put a cigarette butt on a hook and threw it out there and it floated, like they would probably eat it.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah.

Matt Lewis: It's not something you really need to overthink.

It's just that they, they have a diet that is composed primarily of a lot of adult terrestrial and aquatic insects. So just like we kinda nerd out all the things that trout eat, you know, all the different mayflies and stone flies and caddisflies, and you got grasshoppers and all those things, that makes up a majority of the diet of redeye bass in these small upland streams because that's what's available.

And so they're already keyed into the surface of the water. They are just,

D. Roger Maves: They're looking up

Matt Lewis: Surface, they're looking up. They're always looking up, I feel like.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah.

Matt Lewis: And so there are some [00:33:00] just a breathtaking memories that I have etched into my mind of these fish absolutely going airborne, porpoising up eating these poppers, going back down and you know, just the setting in which this is occurring, like these mountain are all around rocky cliff faces and waterfalls and it's just, it is a surreal experience and that's what I love.

I love that top water take. Now these fish also eat a lot of crayfish, just like any other bass they eat. I mean, they're opportunistic. All bass are opportunistic. So. We've done some diet studies and looked in the stomach content of some of these fish that we've studied, and they do eat other fish. They eat other redeye bass.

They eat a lot of crayfish. They eat worms, lizards, you know, if they can get it in their mouth, they eat it.

D. Roger Maves: [00:34:00] Sure.

Matt Lewis: And so I enjoy the popper bite. I like the top water popper bite, but you can be just as effective if you're comfortable with fishing streamer patterns, whether that's like a simple clouser minnow or a micro game changer. I mean, all that kind of stuff has caught multitudes of redeye bass.

I really like Brandon Bells of Panther branch bugs. He's an Alabama fly tyer. He's in the book as well. He ties these little hatchling, he calls 'em hatchling crayfish. And so it's really just a really small, crayfish pattern that work extremely well for redeye bass because they're kind of sized down for those fish.

So short answer, it doesn't matter.

D. Roger Maves: Mm-hmm.

Matt Lewis: But my answer is top water is hands down.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah.

Matt Lewis: I think the best.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah. And the most fun it sounds like. Yeah,

Matt Lewis: Definitely fun.

D. Roger Maves: Now, [00:35:00] now gear wise, I'm assuming you're fishing with pretty lightweight gear for these fish, maybe four weight, three weight rods?

Matt Lewis: Yeah.

D. Roger Maves: In general

Matt Lewis: I, I think everybody sometimes has their own preferences. For me, when I've pursue redeye bass, it's typically pretty high up in these river systems to where if I catch a bass, like they're the only bass I'm gonna catch. And so I prefer to usually use a 7, 6, 3 weight. I've kind of slowly been. Moving over to the, the fiberglass world. So the, the glass rods 7, 6 3 weights are probably my favorite to use on these type streams.

But you know, as people fish lower down in some of these river systems where there may be some overlap between some larger bass species like largemouth or more commonly Alabama bass, taking a four, even a five weight's [00:36:00] probably a good idea just in case you hook one of those larger bass,

D. Roger Maves: Larger fish

Matt Lewis: You got.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah,

Matt Lewis: Yeah. You've got the ability to, to fight it, you know, but I prefer three weights.

D. Roger Maves: Okay. Okay. Let me take another quick break here, Matt. And when we come back I'd like to talk about those other bass species that are definitely targets for fly fishers as well. So hang tight, I'll be right back.

Discover the power of Pure Skagit with Olympic Peninsula Skagit tactics from delicate, soft tackles to hefty steelhead flies. OPST'S versatile casting system meets the demands of every angling situation. With Ed Ward's unparalleled Skagit rod design and casting expertise, OPST offers you quicker route to mastering effective casting techniques, whether battling wind and rain, or targeting steelhead trout or smallmouth bass, trust OPST innovative rods, lines, and tips to elevate your fishing experience.

Join the ranks of skilled anglers who [00:37:00] rely on OPST for consistency proficiency. And it's superior fly fishing adventure. Unleash your potential with OPST today. Visit pureskagit.com or call them at (206) 858-8476. Again, that's pureskagit.com or (206) 858-8476.

You're listening, Ask About Fly Fishing Internet Radio. We're talking with Matt Lewis about Alabama's Best Fly Fishing. If you'd like to ask Matt a question, let's go to our website, askaboutflyfishing.com, fill out that form on our homepage, and we'll get your question in here and try to answer it on the show tonight.

Okay, Matt, yeah. So Redeye is just, well, there's seven species of them, right?

Matt Lewis: That's right. Yes.

D. Roger Maves: I was gonna say one species. Well, you know, there's no more than that, but what are the other species of bass that are in Alabama that people like to fly fish for?

Matt Lewis: So I would [00:38:00] say that probably the next. Most popular and most widely distributed is probably the, the Alabama bass. So Alabama bass formerly were thought to be subspecies of spotted bass.

So the, you know, Kentucky spotted bass that most people are aware of, it looks a lot like that, but they get bigger. And there's some slight differences if you look at 'em side by side. But for all intents

and purposes, they look like a spotted bass. And once we found out that they're actually two different things and they behave differently too, the Alabama bass are very aggressive.

They kind of have this reputation for being mean. They hit hard. They fight hard, they're just, they're a tough fish. And so that's a really popular one. The same river systems that I've mentioned for redeye bass are also the Native river systems [00:39:00] for Alabama bass. It's just that they typically reside lower down in those river systems.

So the larger order, you know, parts of those rivers while the redeye bass are typically more, you know, better suited for the upland small stream habitat. And obviously there's some overlap transition zones between those. But that's a big one.

The smallmouth bass in North Alabama is, you know, has its own cult following up there. And there's a lot of anglers that travel up to North Alabama just to catch a smallmouth in Alabama without having to go to Tennessee. We always kind of joke, I lived in North Alabama for a while and we always joked that if people call a smallmouth, you must have caught that in Tennessee. 'cause we didn't talk about our smallmouth fishery.

D. Roger Maves: Oh.

Matt Lewis: 'cause it, it was small and we just didn't want people to know about it, you know? Um,

D. Roger Maves: Yeah.

Matt Lewis: So, you know, it was [00:40:00] that kind of secretive type deal. But smallmouth are well known by a lot of people as a, a common fly rod fish.

D. Roger Maves: Right.

Matt Lewis: And so that's, that's also a really popular one in Alabama. You just have to go to North Alabama.

D. Roger Maves: Now they

Matt Lewis: Of course, largemouth

D. Roger Maves: They're not in the same, well hold on, uh, the smallmouth are not in the same river systems that the redeye and the, and the Alabama bass are in different river systems.

Matt Lewis: That's correct. So they're in the Tennessee River system of North Alabama. So the Tennessee River kind of dips down into Alabama.

And so that river system and a lot of its tributaries contain native smallmouth bass populations. Now, the exception to the rule, especially when we're talking about bass, is that anglers have moved bass all over the place between river systems. Between states across the [00:41:00] country. And so really a big part of what I've done the last decade really is through genetics, helping a lot of these

southeastern fish and game agencies survey the river and reservoir populations of black bass that they have, to understand if they have a non-native species that's present in those systems or not.

And then what's the impact of that? And the impact more, more often than not has been widespread hybridization.

D. Roger Maves: I was just gonna ask you that.

Matt Lewis: So Alabama bass.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah.

Matt Lewis: Yeah. So Alabama bass have been very commonly moved. Into reservoir systems from their native areas in Alabama. They've been moved into Georgia, they've been moved into South Carolina, they've been moved into North Carolina and Virginia and Tennessee. And so all the [00:42:00] southeastern agencies are quickly trying to figure out what do we do? Because the end result of all this is the homogenization of the black bass diversity that we currently get to enjoy and celebrate as they hybridize with the native bass in those systems. You're left with a mix of hybrids and eventually just the fish that was introduced, so you lose that native population. So if you think about some of the world class smallmouth fisheries that exist in Tennessee and North Carolina and Virginia.

They're pretty worried about this, right? Because they could lose those fisheries and just be left with Alabama bass or Alabama smallmouth hybrids. That's been a big issue. So I just say that to say that the smallmouth, or in the Tennessee River system, the Alabama bass are in the mobile basin, just like the redeye bass. But there are some [00:43:00] cases where Alabama bass have been introduced into the Tennessee River system like Pickwick and some of those famous smallmouth areas. They do have Alabama bass now present.

D. Roger Maves: Now, do the hybrids reproduce as hybrids?

Matt Lewis: They do. So what they typically do is they back cross with one of the parental species.

D. Roger Maves: Okay.

Matt Lewis: And so then you're left with these like, you know, you just get all kinds of, what we call admixture, just mixtures of genomic ancestry. Between these fish

D. Roger Maves: Like going to the, like going down to the Humane Society, right.

Matt Lewis: I mean it really, it really is.

D. Roger Maves: You're looking at the puppies, right?

Matt Lewis: These are all mutt fish and some are obvious, but some are not.

And so when I was at the Auburn University, the lab I worked in, there was a genetics lab that specialized in basically testing bass populations for these agencies. [00:44:00] And we had several states that would actually send us fin clips of potential state spotted bass records to verify, to make sure they were in fact spotted bass or were they Alabama bass or were they spotted Bass? Alabama bass hybrids, because they came from systems where they knew based on our other work that Alabama bass had been introduced, so they could no longer trust that that was a pure population of spotted bass.

And oftentimes, I think every time it came back the fish was either a pure Alabama bass or an Alabama bass spotted bass hybrid.

So, you know, it's like, sorry, no new record. But you know, that's the world we live in now.

D. Roger Maves: Right, right. Well, you were starting to, uh, talk about the largemouth and so why don't you go down that, that road here for a minute.

Matt Lewis: Sure. Yeah. I mean, you know, the largemouth America's [00:45:00] sport fish really, right? I mean they, that's been the one species that really has been introduced everywhere. They could live in any mud puddle,

D. Roger Maves: Right.

Matt Lewis: That's out there. And I think they get overlooked a lot by fly fishermen just because there's so many other species of bass that maybe are, you know, more adapt adept in these like riverine type systems. But Alabama has some world class, largemouth bass fishing. I mean that's, we host a lot of the tournament trails and things like that for the professional bass, fishermen and circuits, and

So the opportunities there, there's just not a lot of people fly fishing for them, but you can get out on multiple different world renowned lakes and fish for largemouth. I've caught some very large, largemouth in some of the river systems, just fishing for other things. And some of my best largemouth on the fly have been in rivers actually.

So there's excellent largemouth fishing here. [00:46:00] There's also, you can catch spotted bass, the Kentucky Spotted bass in the Tennessee River system in the same system as the smallmouth bass in North Alabama. They, you know, just in some of the reservoirs and river systems up there. And then you can catch what is not formally described yet, but there's something.

Commonly referred to as a Choctaw bass, which is down in South Alabama where I grew up in the Choctawhatchee River System of North Alabama, or sorry, South Alabama and North Florida. It lives in those kind of tannin and stained tidal river systems, but not in the same areas where you would find largemouth.

Those river systems do have somewhat limestone shoals and areas where there's a little bit more current than others, and those bass are [00:47:00] typically oriented near that current, and so they're always gonna be kind of associated with that current, and so it, it's just a different bass that you can catch in a totally different type of habitat in, in the southern most portion of Alabama.

So that's about it. You can catch Shoal bass, which are mostly, available in Georgia, but because we do share the Choctawhatchee River with Georgia, the Choctawhatchee River proper does have some large shoal systems where you can still catch shoal bass.

But a lot of the tributaries that extend, you know, into Alabama's borders that formerly had shoal bass, that those populations have disappeared.

And it's been a combination of some unfortunate drought events that just happened the same time as some habitat changes and things like [00:48:00] that. It wasn't due to hybridization or overfishing or anything like that. It was habitat issues and drought that pretty much we lost those populations of shoal bass in Alabama.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah. Now, which is the largest bass down there, is it the Alabama bass or largemouth, but would you.

Matt Lewis: I would say the largemouth.

D. Roger Maves: Largemouth, yeah.

Matt Lewis: Um, the largemouth certainly has the potential to get the largest by weight for sure.

D. Roger Maves: Mm-hmm.

Matt Lewis: Now you can catch some very large smallmouth, some very large Alabama bass, some very large shoal bass, and so typically lengthwise we're talking, you know, 21, 22 inch fish.

Maybe they, you know, get up to six to eight pounds, something like that. Those would be large Alabama bass and smallmouth and uh, shoal [00:49:00] bass. But they do get that big.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah. This picture of your guy Drew Morgan with an Alabama bass.

Matt Lewis: Mm-hmm.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah. It looks like a pretty nice fish.

Matt Lewis: Yeah, that's one of the good ones. Yeah.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah.

Matt Lewis: That's a lifetime fish.

D. Roger Maves: Very nice. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. What about, um, stripe bass?

Matt Lewis: Yes, Stripe bass are, you know, in Alabama, like a lot of places now, you know, going back to the way we've kind of modified the natural world, mostly those are tail race fisheries now. So there used to be a population of stripe bass native to the Gulf of Mexico, and they would actually

migrate all the way from the Gulf of Mexico up into these river systems that drained to the Gulf of Mexico.

And once we started damming up the rivers, then we've kind of halted those migrations, therefore kind of irreversibly affecting those populations. And [00:50:00] so now all the stripe bass are essentially in reservoir systems. You know, they'll run up to tail races, kind of go through the motions of spawning, but they don't really spawn.

D. Roger Maves: Okay.

Matt Lewis: So they're obviously supported via hatchery rearing and stocking and things like that. But there's still some really excellent stripe bass fishing. So typically, uh, fall and early spring are good times when those fish are kind of making those runs up into those tail race areas, and you can catch them by throwing sinking lines or intermediate lines with just like shad imitations. That's what those fish are feeding on. And, and the shad can be so abundant at times where, I mean, they are really keyed in on like, if you're throwing a four inch fly and they're keyed in on a three inch fly, like you're not gonna get, you're not gonna get eat. Yeah. It can be [00:51:00] very,

D. Roger Maves: Match the hatch, right?

Matt Lewis: It can be very specific, which kind of adds to the fun of it sometimes.

But I had, until I wrote, started writing this book project, there was a lot of species. I had never actually caught myself on the fly, so I was able to kind of go out and with people that were experts in that particular thing and you know I went out with some folks to catch my first stripe bass on the fly. I mean, I was blown away at the experience because I was like, well, how am I gonna know if I've got a hit? And they were kind of laugh. They were like, oh, you'll know.

And looking back, they were right because I remember that first, it's like a freight train. Just, I mean, I thought the rod was gonna get jerked outta my hand, and I was using an eight weight. It's a pretty stout rod. It just made me feel like I, I had no power whatsoever.

So it's a lot of fun. But it's a tail race fishery. You can fish for them, you know, into the summer months. But just ethically, typically, you know, that's discouraged [00:52:00] just because they don't recover as well. Typically in the summertime, they're trying to find cool oxygenated water, so that's usually heading up to a spring fed source or something like that.

So if you were to spend a lot of time fighting those fish, just because they're already stressed. The chances of a mortality event occurring after you catch that fish is pretty high. So a lot of anglers kind of give 'em a break.

D. Roger Maves: Okay.

Matt Lewis: You know, outside of those cooler transition months.

D. Roger Maves: Okay, well let's take a, another quick break here, Matt, and we'll talk about some of those maybe less popular fish, but, um, very unusual fish that you might catch in Alabama.

Matt Lewis: Oh, yeah.

D. Roger Maves: Fly Fishers International needs your support. Its conservation projects at both the national and club level are addressing critical issues of importance to fly fishers. The organization provides grants to help with the restoration of habitats like Wolf Creek in Idaho and [00:53:00] Sands Creek in Delaware County, New York, and funds projects that collect valuable data about fish and their habitats. Like the peacock bass study Miami, Florida.

FFI serves as a strong advocate for fly fishing in all waters, for all fish to preserve and to promote the arts of fly casting and fly tying, and to help ensure future generations can continue to enjoy these one of a kind experiences. These efforts won't be nearly as effective without your help. If you're not already a member, we invite you to join Fly Fishers International as they work to cultivate conservation, education and community within the sport of fly fishing.

Join Fly Fishers International today and help support their fine work. For more information, go to their website at flyfishersinternational.org. Again, it's flyfishersinternational.org.

You're listening to Ask About Fly Fishing Internet Radio. We talk with Matt Lewis about Alabama's Best Fly Fishing. If you'd like to ask Matt a question, just go to our homepage and submit your question [00:54:00] there using in that form and we will, we'll try to get it answered here.

Now, still speaking about fresh water. Yeah, I'll have you go through this kind of quick 'cause we do wanna talk about the. Salt and the other opportunities. Marsh's, estuaries. Um, we wanna hit on that before we finish up tonight, but what are some of the other freshwater species that, like you said, you didn't know about or hadn't fished for that you discovered writing this book?

Matt Lewis: Yeah, so, um, well, I mean the pan fish are, you know, kind of ubiquitous or what I refer to

D. Roger Maves: Right.

Matt Lewis: Panfish. So kind of lumping in blue gill, croppy, uh, red ear sun sunfish are what people commonly call shell cracker, red breasted sunfish, red spotted. I mean, there's, there's so many different panfish that you can catch and that's always fun because those can be trip savers, you know, and keep you from getting skunked.

I have for me many times, but there's also a lot of other, I would say, like you mentioned, [00:55:00] less popular things. There's a lot of carp areas where you can fish, kind of the mud flats of a lot of the big reservoir systems and river systems. You can catch common carp, you know, just like you read about fishing for 'em anywhere else, you know, it's a very, uh, it's a game of accuracy and patience and a lot of frustration.

Maybe they'll eat, maybe they won't. Can you see it? I don't know. You know, it's a challenging way to fish, so that's an option in a lot of different places. Certainly when you get into some of the toothy, more toothy fish like, uh, chain pickerel, there's a lot of different spring fed streams down in South Alabama and North Alabama where you can catch chain pickerel, which give us the thrill of what people get to experience with Northern pike. Just in a little bit smaller package.

There's multiple species of gar, so you can catch, you [00:56:00] know, spotted gar, longnose gar, shortnose gar. Those are all possibilities that you can catch on the fly. Walleye, there are walleye and actually there's walleye that are native to Alabama, so like a southern strain of walleye that are unique to Alabama.

They move into the shallows to spawn usually in February, so the cooler months, you can get out and catch those when they're a little bit more shallow and accessible to the fly. Fishermen, we talked about stripe bass, but there's also white bass, which are kind of a smaller version of that. They do some very large spawning runs and can be caught basically on every cast certain times of the year.

Hybrids, so, uh, hybrids between white bass and stripe bass. People sometimes call 'em wipers. Also a lot of fun below the tail races, certain times of the year. [00:57:00] Skipjack. Type of fish that also, you know, certain times of year kind of runs into some of the, the river systems below the tail races. You can catch them pretty frequently.

I mean, really there's, there's a lot.

D. Roger Maves: I mean gosh.

Matt Lewis: You know, and that's just fresh water. So

D. Roger Maves: We're not even talking trout yet, or, yeah,

Matt Lewis: No.

D. Roger Maves: So,

Matt Lewis: No.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah. Yeah. It is kind of, now I see why you say it's Amazon of America.

Matt Lewis: Yes.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah. I mean, all these things you can catch

Matt Lewis: Like a safari for,

D. Roger Maves: Yeah.

Matt Lewis: An aquatic safari.

D. Roger Maves: Well, we haven't really touched on the river systems. What would say you're, you know, of the river systems, which ones stand out or would you say were the must fish destinations for fly anglers if they were coming to Alabama?

Matt Lewis: It's hard to pick just one, but I would say.

D. Roger Maves: No, say three or four or whatever you, you would, yeah,

Matt Lewis: Yeah. I would say those mobile basin streams that I [00:58:00] talked about that have the redeye bass and the Alabama bass, so that would be the, the Coosa, the Tallapoosa, the Cahaba, and the Black Warrior.

There's some similarities in all those in that there's some species overlap and things like that, but there's also some very noticeable differences in those just with the landscape around you, the water quality, the water clarity, some of the rock geological structures, you'll see the type of rock.

It is very different and it's hard to explain unless you just see it. But like in the Black Warrior River system, you know, you'll have some pretty good stands of like hemlocks and you know, just some of those old world trees that you don't see a lot anymore. And that area does have some of the last. You know, remaining Hemlock stands in Alabama, whereas you go in some of the Coosa and Tallapoosa [00:59:00] River systems, you're moving from the Cumberland Plateau area into more of a Piedmont type area, which just is, is totally different than the upper Coosa that may be more of that ridge and valley type landscape.

The landscape dictates, the geology dictates the landscape, which dictates the water

D. Roger Maves: Yeah.

Matt Lewis: Qualities. I would say the species that you can catch and just the natural beauty of those areas. Those are uniquely Alabama rivers that you should experience.

D. Roger Maves: Jason Stacy in Kentucky wants to know, if you can only choose one place to go,

Matt Lewis: Oh man,

D. Roger Maves: where would you go?

Matt Lewis: That's a tough one for me.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah.

Matt Lewis: I would say the Coosa River system, to me is the largest, and it has

D. Roger Maves: Mm-hmm.

Matt Lewis: I think it captures a lot of that diversity, that it's almost like a microcosm of Alabama.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah. Give you a real taste of [01:00:00] Alabama, right? Yeah.

Matt Lewis: Yeah. I would say that.

D. Roger Maves: Okay. Okay. Okay. So we're running short on time, but I did want to touch on the salt water fishing, the Gulf Coast fishing, the marshals estuaries.

And maybe you can just talk kind of about what's available. 'cause I realize fishing for, um, king mackerel is much different than fishing for a red fish. But, uh, maybe you can kind of give us an overview of just what your coastline, what's available there, because the Gulf is just chock full of all kinds of trophy fish to fish for. So what does Alabama have to offer?

Matt Lewis: Yeah, so you know, Alabama, just because we do have a good bit of mileage along the Gulf Coast, we get access to all those Gulf Coast species. But I think Alabama's special, it kind of stands out. For a couple reasons. So that Mobile River Basin, we've already talked about how diverse it is and it's all connected, right? So it's diverse all the way from the headwaters [01:01:00] down to the Gulf.

And if you look at it compared to a lot of the issues with the Mississippi River, with the sedimentation and things like that, a lot of those marsh habitats in Mississippi and even in Louisiana have been buried by a lot of that sedimentation and channelization that's has been happening there.

But the Alabama coastline is largely, not completely, but largely untouched by that. In some cases, it's kind of the last holdout of an intact ecosystem, marsh habitat that a lot of different salt water fish use as nursery habitat. And so depending on the time of year. There's always a flux of these coastal and even pelagic species that come into Alabama waters for, for breeding and, and then using those as nursery waters and then moving back out to the sea. [01:02:00] So it's just kind of a constant interchange.

So you can fish, inshore and fish for all the typical Gulf Coast species. So red fish, speckled sea trout, flounder, Jack Crevalle certain times of the year, pompano in the surf lady fish, all those types of things that you would normally get in inshore Spanish mackerel.

But then you can go just a little bit offshore or even near shore and catch those same things depending on the time of year. But you can also get into some larger fish and some typical offshore type fish. So red snapper, cobia that migrate through Tarpon, that migrate through, you can catch all those in Alabama.

So, um, it really is just about anything in the Gulf you can catch in Alabama at some point in the year.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah, yeah. It's, um, it sounds like [01:03:00] incredible a fishery in Alabama. I mean, it's, it reminds me a lot of Florida, what Florida has to offer, but maybe not the, the popularity where you can actually probably get a guide to take you out.

Matt Lewis: Right.

D. Roger Maves: Whereas Florida, it's like, yeah, well,

Matt Lewis: Not, not the popularity and not the, not the miles of coastline that Florida has. So it's, it's

D. Roger Maves: Right,

Matt Lewis: It's kind of compressed into a, a shorter coastline. But there are, you know, several guides. Um, in the Gulf Coast region, there's some fly shops in the Gulf Coast region.

Um, you know, so it, it's growing it. The fly fishing scene in Alabama is growing and so it's there.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah. Yeah. Very nice. Very nice. Going back to freshwater, I just thought came to my mind, I want to ask you about, because it's happening out west more and more, is the, [01:04:00] uh, the taking down of dams. 'cause you had mentioned that kind of messed up the native striper fishing that was once existed.

Is that happening in the East at all? Like it is in the west.

Matt Lewis: It is now in Alabama. The only thing, I mean there's been, in the last decade there's been the removal of some, like some low head dams, things like that.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah.

Matt Lewis: Now your large hydroelectric dams. No,

D. Roger Maves: No,

Matt Lewis: Those are just, I think, fixtures that we're stuck with. Now, there's a lot of research going into maybe how do we live with those? Or how do we navigate around those? What are, you know, how can we think outside the box and reconnect some of these historic migrations, not only with striped bass, but also things like sturgeon and, you know, all these things used to be able to, people would catch Sturgeon, Gulf Sturgeon in Birmingham, [01:05:00] Alabama, in the Cahaba River that migrated all the way up from the Gulf, and they can no longer do that.

D. Roger Maves: Right?

Matt Lewis: And so that's why the Gulf sturgeons, you know, kind of one of those critically endangered species. So I think there's some, some interest in talk about. Yes, let's get rid of things that we're not using that are just, you know, preventing migrations. But also like the big hydroelectric dams. We all like air conditioning.

We all like power. So until there's another alternative, I don't think those are going anywhere. It's, but there is a lot of work in, well, how do we kinda navigate around those structures now?

D. Roger Maves: Yeah. Well I suppose too, out west, some of the rivers we're talking about are salmon and steelhead rivers and they probably get more press than sturgeon or some of these other, you know, species.

Matt Lewis: Yeah.

D. Roger Maves: It's kinda like, you know, [01:06:00] when endangered species, lions and jaguars and elephants are much more popular than some beetle, you know, on the African desert.

Matt Lewis: Absolutely.

D. Roger Maves: You know?

Matt Lewis: Yeah.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah. So. Yeah, it's, um, again, I was reading about that National Geographic recently. Yeah. Yeah. Because the people just, they're more attracted to, to those kind of exotic

Matt Lewis: Mm-hmm.

D. Roger Maves: Animals. And of course, steelhead and salmon are great sport fish that, uh, I think people are more keen to kind of help preserve. But, um, yeah, I'd like to see more of that happening. I certainly would. And, and I did a show called You. It was, uh, uh, he wrote, I can't remember his name, but he wrote a book called Cracked and it was about dams.

Matt Lewis: Mm-hmm.

D. Roger Maves: And, um

Matt Lewis: Mm-hmm.

D. Roger Maves: And he was saying that a lot of them nowadays, uh, really don't offer any really good hydroelectric power and are, you know, with wind and solar coming on [01:07:00] board that be. Less and less desirable. So, you know, maybe there's a chance, maybe not in our lifetime, but maybe our grandchildren.

Matt Lewis: Right, yeah.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah.

Matt Lewis: I think as long as we're having those conversations, you know, and thinking about, well, what other options do we have?

D. Roger Maves: Right? Yeah. That's a possibility. Yeah. Yeah. Like you said, what, how can we live with it? Or, you know, uh, work around it or, or those kind of things. Yeah. Well, unfortunately, it's time to, to wrap things up.

It was a pleasure having you hold on though, 'cause we're gonna give away. One year membership to Fly Fishers International, one year membership to Trout Unlimited. And we're also giving away a copy of Matt's book, Alabama's Best Fly Fishing courtesy of Stackpole Books. So hold on folks, and we will be back in just a moment and give those prizes away.

The Bonefish and Tarpon Trust works very hard to safeguard the future of our beloved flats fisheries from protecting spawning sites threatened by unsustainable flat fishing pressure to securing historic [01:08:00] funding to restore Florida's Everglades and estuaries. Thanks to their members, they've expanded their conservation of The Bahamas, Belize, and Mexico.

There's still much more work to be done. And they need your help. With your support, we 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 Tarp and Trust today. Again, that's btt.org.

Just a quick reminder, everyone, before you leave the website tonight, please take a minute and give us your feedback about the show.

You can find a link under on our homepage, end of the section on tonight's show that says, what'd you think of the show? Just click on a link, leave your comments. We'd really appreciate it.

Now it's time to give away the prizes. The winners of our drawings are randomly selected from the show's registration database. If you didn't register for tonight's show, it's too late now, but make sure you do so for our next show so you don't miss out on some of the. A chance to win some of these great prizes. Now, if you are one of the lucky winners, we'll contact you after [01:09:00] the show to collect your information so that we can deliver your prize to you.

So first, we'll be giving away a one year membership to Fly Fishers International. To learn more about Fly Fishers International, go to flyfishersinternational.org.

Great organization to support. So check them out. And, uh, our winner for that is Dave Pate. Dave Pate in Texas. So Dave, uh, congratulations on winning that.

And, uh, now we'll give away a one year membership to Trout Unlimited and learn more about Trout Unlimited. Go to tu.org. And let's see. Our winner is coming up for that is Jason Stacy in Kentucky. Jason Stacy in Kentucky. So congratulations, Jason, Jason, and, um, glad you, I know you'll enjoy your membership to Trout Unlimited.

So now we're gonna give away Matt's book, Alabama's Best Fly Fishing courtesy is Stackpole Books. Again, if you don't win this [01:10:00] tonight, you can always buy it. You can find a link on our website and or of course you know, Amazon or wherever you shop for your books. And let's see. So to do this, I'm going to ask a question and you go to use that form on our homepage. Same place that you can ask questions and um, and submit your answer. The first person that gets it correct will win Matt's book, Alabama's Best Fly Fishing.

So question is make this easy on you folks tonight. Sometimes I make them too hard, but how many. Striped bass, I mean not striped bass. How many redeye bass species are there? How many redeye bass species are there?

So now we have to, there's a little bit of delay, uh, Matt before they hear that. And then of course they have to type their answer and send that in. So we will, we'll hang out here just for a minute or so and wait for hopefully a correct answer. And I learned a [01:11:00] lot now, I, I didn't ever ask, do redeye bass actually have red eyes?

Matt Lewis: They do, but you know, all bass can have red eyes at different times due to stress and temperature. So not the best

D. Roger Maves: Interesting

Matt Lewis: Diagnostic characteristic.

D. Roger Maves: Oh, okay. Okay. Still waiting.

I wonder if something's wrong with my system here.

Uh, not getting something in here, Matt. Uh, I don't know if there's something wrong with my software here or not, but okay. We won't spend any more time on that. What I'll do is I'll just randomly pick somebody from the registration database as well and we'll give them a copy of the book. So, sorry, that's not working. [01:12:00] That's a shame I could be submitting things and I'm just not getting 'em.

Hey, Matt, great to have you on the show tonight and, uh, pleasure to talk to you. You've got you just a wealth of information on, uh, Alabama's fishing and I appreciate you sharing it all with us tonight.

Matt Lewis: Yeah, thank you so much and appreciate the opportunity to, to talk about it.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah. Well, great. Well hopefully everybody out there, you know, we've, we've got our podcast archive on our website. If you haven't looked in that, be sure to do so.

Top line menu, just, uh, look in the archive, we've got over 425 shows in there. Just use your keywords and, uh, search for anything you want. Now, you can search for maybe by tomorrow, redeye bass and, uh, any kind of type of fish or fishery or that kind of thing. I, I know you'll, you'll be surprised at what you'll find out there in those searches.

Our next broadcast will be on, let's see, our next broadcast is going to be on September [01:13:00] 10th and it's gonna be with, uh, Henry Ramsay. And Henry Ramsay is going to talk to us about the Eastern Hatches. And so. He's written a book called Major, Matching Major Eastern Hatches, and we're gonna dive deep into the life cycles of these key insects and, and the flies that imitate them.

He's kind of an expert on this, so whether you're new to entomology or season angler, you know, looking to refine your approach this episode will help you unlock those secrets to more productive days on the stream. So join us for Henry's September 10th. We'll do that show with him.

You can add that show to your calendar just on our homepage, right under Henry's picture. There, you see the calendar icons, just click on that, add it to your calendar, and then you, you'll be, you'll have a reminder there to, to join us for the live show.

We'd like to thank Fly Fishers International, Trout Unlimited, Bonefish and Tarpon Trust, Olympic Peninsula's Skagit Tactics, The Ugly Bug Fly Shop and Water Master for [01:14:00] sponsoring our show tonight.

Don't forget to visit our website at askaboutflyfishing.com and make sure you're signed up to receive our announcements so you don't miss out on any of our future broadcasts.

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