

A Fly Fisher's Road Trip Across California

With Greg Vinci

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 saltwater. Hello, I'm Roger Maves, your host for tonight's show. On this broadcast, we'll be featuring Greg Vinci, and he'll be answering your questions on 'A Fly Fisher's Road Trip Across California'.

This show will be 90 minutes in length, and we're broadcasting live over the internet. If you'd like to ask Greg a question, just go to our homepage at askaboutflyfishing.com and use that Q&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 broadcasts. 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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And when you do, use [#askaboutflyfishing](#) and also [#flyfishing](#). In fact, if you have time while you're listening to the show, do it while you listen to the show and share the knowledge out there with others. The content of this broadcast is copyrighted. It's the property of The Knowledge Group Inc., doing business as Ask About Fly Fishing. When we return, we'll be talking with Greg Vinci about 'A Fly Fisher's Road Trip Across California'.

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Before we introduce Greg, I'd like to let you know about the great prizes we have to give away tonight. For our drawing, 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, which is at askaboutflyfishing.com, and look for the link under tonight's section that says Register for our free drawing. Click on that link, fill out that form, and we'll

announce the winners at the end of the show. We'll also be giving away a copy of Greg's book, 'A Complete Guide to California Fly Fishing' courtesy of Wild River Press.

And to find out more about the books that Wild River Press publishes, you can go to wildriverpress.com and check them out there. We've also got a link to [00:03:00] Greg's book right on our homepage there of tonight's show, so you can reach that Wild River Press website through that link as well. Now, to win, you gotta be the first person to answer the question I ask at the end of the show.

The question will be about something that Greg and I talk about during the show. You must submit your answer along with your name and location in that text box on our homepage. So, uh, take notes, listen closely, and use your best typing skills at the end, and maybe you'll be the proud winner of Greg's book, A Complete Guide to California Fly Fishing.

Well, tonight our guest is Greg Vinci. Upon graduating California State University, Sacramento, Greg's first career was as a commercial photographer. As time progressed, he moved on to a career in sales and eventually founded a fly tackle distribution and manufacturing business, Sierra Pacific Products, where he innovated many popular fly fishing tackle and accessory products.

After selling his business in 2010, Greg kept [00:04:00] his foot in the door of the fly tackle industry by continuing to develop fly tackle product lines on a consultancy basis for clients in the fly tackle industry. 2011, his product Insta-Set Indicators was selected by Field & Stream magazine as the best fly tackle accessory of the year.

Greg is also a signature fly tier for Umpqua Feather Merchants, and his fly patterns can be found in many fly shops around the country. After selling his Sierra Pacific Products in 2010, Greg began a new career contributing photography and articles to national outdoor magazines. Some of the publications he has written for are Fly Fishing and Tying Journal, Sierra Heritage, The Drake, Fly Fisherman Magazine, Fly Rod & Reel Magazine, American Angler, Salmon and Steelhead Journal, Northwest Fly Fishing Magazine, Southwest Fly Fishing Magazine, and Runner's World to name a few.

Subjects have ranged from historical articles to fly fishing and travel. 2015, Greg authored a book, Fly Fisher's Guide to California, followed up [00:05:00] with A Complete Guide to California Fly Fishing, which has been published this year. Additionally, Greg has had his photography exhibited at the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, Canada, BC, and One Man Show at the University of California, Davis.

Greg regularly speaks to fly fishing clubs throughout the West about fly fishing opportunities in the state of California and Nevada.

Greg, welcome to Ask About Fly Fishing Internet Radio

Greg Vinci: Well, hi. Thank you for having me.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah, good to have you on this. Here in Colorado, beautiful summer night, so, uh, it's starting to actually be summer here, so, um-

Greg Vinci: That's good.

D. Roger Maves: How's it doing out in California? Any- Hot ... major disasters in here?

Greg Vinci: Well, it's a beautiful, it's, it's a beautiful summer night except that it's about 95 degrees, you know, at this point. Mm. So, but we're kinda used to it. We're getting used to it. This is the beginning of it. It's been cool, but it's-

D. Roger Maves: Yeah

Greg Vinci: Beginning of our hot season, so.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah. Yeah, yeah, it's [00:06:00] a-coming. It's a-coming.

Well, let's dig in here. Just to kinda set the stage here, we are, uh, doing this kind of a make-believe road trip through California, let's call it that, to give people an idea of all the different places in California. I mean, California is huge. I think it is the biggest state in the union. But so many places to go, so many places to explore. So Greg, if someone had two weeks to take, you know, the ultimate California fly fishing road trip, what makes California such a unique destination compared to other trout states that we might pick out?

Greg Vinci: Well, you know, the thing that really makes it unique is that practically all recreational fish species from saltwater to freshwater, they can be fished in California.

An example, steelhead, coastal rainbow trout, McCloud rainbow trout, and other separate, like, subspecies of rainbow trout, Lahontan [00:07:00] cutthroats, golden trout, largemouth, smallmouth bass, striped bass, shad, salmon, et cetera, so, and an assorted saltwater species. Yet all of those are available in, in different times of the year.

And of course we have ... They require a variety of waters in order to live in, and we have about every variety of water that pretty much exists in the United States.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah, it kind of sounds like any time of the year you could be fishing for something if you're willing to move around. .

Greg Vinci: Yes, that's correct.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah.

Greg Vinci: For sure.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah. Whereas other states, you know, you're kind of locked into a particular kind of fishing for a certain part of the year kind of thing. So yeah, and of course, the climate changes from north to south quite significantly as well, and then from the coast to the mountains, right? So-

Greg Vinci: That's true ...

D. Roger Maves: Yeah. It's like its own country out there.

Greg Vinci: Well, it kind of is.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah.

Greg Vinci: The thing is that, one of the things that makes it so diverse, too, is that we have an, particularly in the northern [00:08:00] half of the state, is that we have anadromous fishery, and which means that there are steelhead and salmon, whatever, and shad, too, though they're not indigenous, but and striped bass. But they, they come in at different times of the year, and they come in at different times of the year on different waters. On sometimes, in the case of, say, steelhead on the American River, they don't come in until around Christmas time, okay? On other rivers, they may come in, like the Feather, they may come in on in the fall.

So, but I mean-

D. Roger Maves: Yeah ...

Greg Vinci: There's always something going on somewhere.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah. Yeah, yeah, it sounds like it. It makes it interesting that way.

You wrote the book just recently and published, Complete Guide to California Fly Fishing. In that book, if you... I mean, oh, this is gonna be hard, like what's your favorite fly, right?

But looking at all the waters in your book, which fishery would you call California's crown jewel, and, and why?

Greg Vinci: Man, I don't know. [00:09:00] That's quite a question. You know, I have a lot of dealers in these different areas, right? And they carry my book. So if I leave somebody out, and then they're gonna get mad at me.

You know? But to be honest with you, like I said, it's difficult because so many unique fisheries. I, I guess, you know, if you wanna combine both fishing quality and scenery as criteria, it would be, to me, it'd be a split between the Fall River in northeastern California and Hot Creek, which is in the Eastern Sierra.

And the reason is that they're both, the scenery is very different, but it's absolutely gorgeous and different, and they're great fisheries. They have lots of fish, and they're kind of technical fisheries, but if you figure it out, you're gonna catch a lot of fish.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah, yeah. Oh, that's good. And before we start our little journey here through [00:10:00] California, are there any, you know, like, three things you could recommend that every traveling fly angler should know about fishing in California?

Is there something different there, different licensing, different policies, ways to travel?

Greg Vinci: Well, you mentioned ways to travel. Obviously, many, the majority of the waters, I mean, can be reached by highways and interstates and things like that. There's a... You'd be amazed at how many waters are off of interstates, you know, and, and so the access is really good.

But one thing that, you know, a lot of it has to do with timing because, again, obviously we have, even though California's got a reputation as being a warm state and so on, and well, it is relative to a lot of places, but, you know, we have the Sierras. We definitely have distinct weather, primarily in the northern half of the state, so that affects fishing. You have runoff and all those things that can do. So if anybody was gonna come visit, I mean, you'd want to do a little call ahead, do some, [00:11:00] a little bit of homework to find out when runoff is over, when, if there's a flood stage, which happens periodically, whether that's occurring at the time and all kinds of things like that.

And then be aware, if you want to fish steelhead or salmon, you want to be able to fish it at the time they show up. In different rivers, they show up at different times in different rivers. So, uh, an example, the American River is gonna be, for steelhead, is gonna be a winter thing. And, um, let's say on the Feather River, which we'll talk about probably later, it could be any time of the year. It just depends. They come and go.

And again, like as I already mentioned, the water flows could be erratic, again, during, because of a lot of rain or runoff or whatever. But usually in the springtime in general, that's really a great time. In California, though, the water, um, excuse me for rambling on, folks, the water can get warm in many places, even in the Sierras during the spring, particularly on the west side, on the [00:12:00] west slope, and so you want to time...

Basically, you have, your window of opportunity is, is late spring or maybe mid-spring through July, and then by then the water's getting kind of warm and so on. So anyway, that, you know, would be-

D. Roger Maves: Yeah ...

Greg Vinci: What I would say.

D. Roger Maves: Are there different fishing regulations as you move through different licensing requirements or anything as you move from fishery to fishery?

Greg Vinci: Well, licensing requirements are all basically the same, but seasonal, season requirements vary a lot.

D. Roger Maves: Okay.

Greg Vinci: Uh, w- we have more and more waters are being open to year-round fishing, but there's a lot of waters that open ... A large percentage of the waters open on the last Saturday in April, and they go to November 15th.

But the, most of the catch and release waters, which happen to be some of the more higher quality waters, they're open year-round.

D. Roger Maves: Mm-hmm.

Greg Vinci: So those, those are kind of things to keep in mind. But again, if you come in here, I mean, I would kind of do some homework or [00:13:00] talk to local fly shops and people like that, that are gonna set you straight-

D. Roger Maves: Right

Greg Vinci: On a lot of the stuff.

D. Roger Maves: Okay. Well, let's talk about Central Valley tailwaters. You had mentioned those already. You've highlighted to me Feather River, American River, what is it, Mokelumne?

Greg Vinci: Mokelumne, that's how it's spelled, yeah

D. Roger Maves: Mokelumne

Greg Vinci: But we just call it the Moke, you know?

D. Roger Maves: Moke. Putah, uh, Creek?

Greg Vinci: Mm-hmm.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah, all the... what is the Central Valley, and what do we... Generally, what's the area like and topography?

Greg Vinci: Well, if you look at a- any map of California, you see this long valley that probably runs at least 300 miles, if not la- a lot more, but right through the s- the middle of the state. And in along that valley, along there are several rivers that run into, come down out of the Sierras, out of the West Slope, and they go into the valley.

And most of those rivers have been dammed at some point. [00:14:00] And actually, they were dammed during, uh, back in the 1950s. It was called the Central Valley Project, and to provide water for agriculture and for Southern California. And so each of those valleys, wherever there's a dam, you have a tailwater, and when you have a tailwater, in most cases you have cold water coming out from beneath that dam, which means that those rivers are colder than they would've been before the dam. So before the dams, many of those pri- rivers almost dried up or they had a very low flow, and they had cold water in them. And with it, because of the dams, those same rivers now have cool water in them all year.

Not to say that temperature problems don't arise, but generally speaking, it's better than it was. So with that cold water, you can have fisheries, cold water fish. Again, salmon and steelhead, mostly steelhead in those cases. Many of the waters, the waters south, pretty much south of Fresno, never make it to the [00:15:00] ocean, but they originally did. And so going back into the end of the last ice age, there was a lot of water, and the, ac- like the Kern River, which is the furthest river to the south, would actually end up merging with other rivers and going into the Pacific.

And consequently, you had a steelhead run up there, which no longer exists. But those fish that were trapped up in the mountains were caught are now what's called golden trout. But anyway, let

me jump ahead here, get this over with. So anyway, so all those tailwaters exist all up and down the state, and they all provide a place for anadromous fish to come and spawn every year.

And So I would, you know, the kind of trip, the kind of waters that I would recommend, I mean, obviously, like for a first stop, for example, would be like the American River. It's a great one. It runs right through town, and again, it's a matter of timing, but you have salmon, steelhead, shad runs, and, and striper runs on that [00:16:00] river, and at different times of the year, okay? So it's very accessible. Another one like Putah Creek, which is the only west slope... Oh, well, there's two creeks that run off the coast range into the valley. W- the one, Putah Creek, is the most popular because it's close to the, very close to the East Bay Area, within an hour of the East Bay, and it's a wild trout fishery.

It has some very, very large fish in it, and so that's one. Or the Lower Yuba River is another one, too. Roger, I don't think I mentioned that to you, and I don't know k- how it slipped my mind, but Lower Yuba is another great river, too. So there's plenty of waters. Yeah, those would be my recommendations.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah, one of them was, uh, Feather Creek you had mentioned earlier.

That's kind of developed a loyal following, right? What makes it special and when, when should-

Greg Vinci: Which one the Putah Creek?

D. Roger Maves: No, Feather Creek? Feather River?

Greg Vinci: Oh, Feather River.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah.

Greg Vinci: The Feather [00:17:00] River, it comes out of Oroville Lake, or Oroville Dam, and Oroville Lake's behind it. And what makes it unique is that it comes out about half, most of the flow gets diverted into a big after bay, which is designed to warm water that's gonna go to rice farmers.

The rice won't sprout if the water's too cold, so they diverted it. All right. Now, the original channel is much, doesn't run very fast. It only runs maybe around maybe 2,000 cubic feet per second, which makes it a wadable river, you know, and fish- and it's very, very fertile. And so you have salmon and steelhead runs that come up there, and particularly steelhead runs come up at different times of the year.

Where, let's say, you take the American River, for example, where you basically have one, arguably two steelhead runs in the fall, in the winter, and spring. Where the, on the Feather, you may have runs of rainbows at [00:18:00] different times, and the reason is because you not only do you have, you have a couple different runs of steelhead, a, a fall run and a winter run, but you also have other rainbows from other parts in the water system that find their way into the river to spawn.

So there may be wa- fish that may have been originally spawned in the Sacramento River, or they may have been spawned in the Yuba or somewhere else. And so a lot of them will go into the

Feather and spawn because the conditions are really good. So that's a great river that draws a lot of people. It's a very loyal following of people that fishes that and so on.

D. Roger Maves: Which of these tailwaters would you consider the most underrated fishery in California?

Greg Vinci: God, you know, underrated, I would say the Mokelumne, and the reason is because most people don't even know that it has a fishery. And the Mokelumne is very similar to the American. Actually, it would be [00:19:00] probably, yeah, it's very similar, and it, actually it's the next river south of the American.

And the Mokelumne has a very short section, maybe three-quarters of a mile section that's public right below the dam, but it's, it's kind of a freestone section, and then it slows down into more of a meandering section for the rest of its way where it dumps into the San Joaquin. And that section is all private on both sides, so a lot of people don't fish it unless you have a boat and you float it.

But the area, that 150-yard area, almost a mile area, three-quarters of a mile area upstream is where the fish, I mean, you can't, the steelhead can't go any further, so it's a real good fishery. And plus, the manager of the hatchery there has done a lot of work trying to maintain, build the fishery up in the rivers.

That's kind of an underused resource, so to speak.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah. Yeah. Good. Good. Time for us [00:20:00] to take a quick break, and we'll be right back and we'll start talking about northeastern California, Sacramento, Fall River, Hot Creek. So hang with us, folks. We'll be right back.

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We'll receive your question immediately and we'll try to answer as many of them as possible on the show tonight.

So Greg, I always ask my guests this part of the show, you know, what's going on in your fly fishing world? Tell us about your business. What's happening?

Greg Vinci: Well, kind of been really busy getting this book in shape in order to get it published this year required a, its tremendous amount of work because of the fact that there were copyright problems with the original publisher who had passed away, and it was in, you know, dis- disrepair. And so we had to go through and quite make a lot of changes in the book, or I should say we, it was me, had changed, put new maps. We upgraded a lot of, you know, and updated a lot of the information and changed a lot of photography. So that was a big deal that had been going on. So now we're in the middle of publishing the book, and then at the same time, I do a lot of fly fishing clinics, in particularly on American rivers.

I just [00:22:00] got over steelhead through February, and then I just finished, uh, the shad clinics just last Saturday.

D. Roger Maves: Hmm.

Greg Vinci: So that's been going on in my world, and I'm getting ready to, for a week on the Green River out of Flaming Gorge Lodge-

D. Roger Maves: Oh ...

Greg Vinci: With an old friend of mine. So, and-

D. Roger Maves: Oh, nice ...

Greg Vinci: And, uh, I always look forward to that trip.

So, so that's pretty much, and then hopefully be fishing some Sierra streams not too distant future.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah. And the website where people can find out about what you're up to and

Greg Vinci: Yeah. I have two, two things going. One of them is my fishing report site, which, uh, is the only really comprehensive fishing report site or fly fishing report site.

It's www.californiaflyfishingreports.com, and that's plural, reports.com. And, and what it is, it, it covers about 40 waters in the state, most of them in the northern half of the state, and it gives weekly reviews on how the fishing is. I [00:23:00] get reviews or information from local shops or local guides, and, and it'll tell you what the flows are, and, uh, they'll give you up-to-date flows, up-to-minute flows.

You find lodging through it, you can find information about weather. I mean, uh, you think of a question you may have about a destination and you can get it. And then my other major project is I have a Substack page, and for those of you that don't know what Substack is, that's just a platform for blogging, for doing blogs.

But they take it kind of a step further. It's really well organized, and a lot of writers and photographers are on it. And then I have this blog, and I publish twice a week, most of the time twice a week. Today isn't gonna happen, but because of this. But on, on Tuesdays I usually write an

original story. I may reprint a story from... that came... that I published from another magazine years ago, or any time ago.

And also [00:24:00] on Fridays and Saturdays, I publish a newsletter, and the newsletter is kinda like a portal to all things fly fishing. So you can go there and find information about environmental, uh, organizations or fly fishing organizations, or you can find out a fishing report. You can find out... There's videos on fly fishing, there's updates on what's going on in the industry. It's sort of a news sort of portal. So those are basically-

D. Roger Maves: Okay ...

Greg Vinci: Pretty much what I do.

D. Roger Maves: All right. Terrific. All right. Well, thanks for sharing.

All right, let's get back to northeastern California. You highlighted Upper Sacramento, Fall River, and Hot Creek.

What makes this region, you know, a real angler's paradise?

Greg Vinci: Yeah. Well, you know, one of the reasons, I mean, the fishing is a notch better than a lot of other areas, and the reason is, is because the, the bugs are really prolific in those waters.

[00:25:00] You have a lot of predictable hatches. And one of the reasons for that is because the geology of the area is quite very volcanic.

Because you have, in northeastern California, you have two active volcanoes. You have Shasta, Mount Shasta, and you also have, uh, Mount Lassen, which erupted, I think it, uh, 1908. So that's considered active. And so there's a lot of bugs that live in those little holes in the lava and things like that. And the other thing about it is that several of, you know, a pretty, about four of the, of fly fishing's most legendary waters within an hour of each other in northeastern California.

So you have the Upper Sac, where straight line nymphing was originated. A lot of people don't know that, AKA, the young guys call it euro nymphing, but I refuse to call it that because it was originally straight line nymphing. McCloud River, you got the Pit River, Fall River, Hat Creek, and all those rivers were pivotal in the [00:26:00] development of a lot of fly patterns. A lot of the most famous fly tiers of the mid-century tested their flies on those waters and so on. Those are reasons. They're great fishery. Every one of them is a very, very good fishery.

D. Roger Maves: The Upper Sac is, what kind of fish are we looking for there when we're targeting?

Greg Vinci: Well, in Upper Sac, I mean, we're, we're looking at primarily rainbows, but there are big browns that come up out of Shasta Lake, and because the, the Upper Sac dumps in the Shasta Lake.

D. Roger Maves: Mm-hmm.

Greg Vinci: And then Shasta Lake dumps into the Lower Sacramento River. So there are a lot of browns in there, and they come up the river and so on. But most of the time, you're gonna be fishing

for wild rainbows. There is some supplementation of population, they do plant around the city of Dunsmuir. But other than that, you have a lot of river there that has primarily wild fish and so on.

D. Roger Maves: Okay. Okay.

Greg Vinci: So it, it's a pretty [00:27:00] neat place. Another thing, too, is that it has a lot of access. Um, I-5 runs right along the river between, uh, Mount Shasta and, uh, Mount Sh- well, excuse me, I'm sorry, from Lake Shasta up to the town of Shasta, I-5 runs right along it, and there's many turnouts along there that you can take and get right down to the river and fish. So it's real easy place to fish, and it has a lot of big fish in it, too.

D. Roger Maves: Can you float it as well?

Greg Vinci: You could. I don't know if people are floating. I've... People are fro- no, I mean, for fly fishermen don't float it. Okay.

D. Roger Maves: Okay.

Greg Vinci: There's no-

D. Roger Maves: Okay ...

Greg Vinci: No one guides it and no one floats it.

D. Roger Maves: Okay.

Greg Vinci: But even though you could, but it's a little bit on the small side for that.

D. Roger Maves: Okay.

Greg Vinci: But there's so much wading it.

D. Roger Maves: The Lower Sac, there's a lot of-

Greg Vinci: I'm sorry, what was that?

D. Roger Maves: The Lower S- the Lower Sac is a, a floatable section, right?

Greg Vinci: Definitely.

D. Roger Maves: Lower Sac.

Greg Vinci: Yeah, you have to almost... Yeah, unless it, they get into real low water [00:28:00] mode, which does happen, uh, in the fall. But most of the area on there, and most of the year, it needs to be floated, and there's a lot of boats on there.

I think they have, I think just the fly shop runs 17 boats a day out of their shop.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Fall River. Tell us about Fall River, why it's special.

Greg Vinci: Fall River is a really, is a very, very special place. It, to a photographer like myself, it's a picture postcard kind of place, and when you're on the water, it's a slow, meandering river.

I think it's about the 4,000-foot elevation, okay? But it runs through this lush mountain meadow. It's actually agriculture, but it was originally a meadow, and it meanders. Water's crystal clear. If you stand up on a boat as you putt up the river, it's like an aquarium. You can see fish scattering everywhere.

And the scenery is, is [00:29:00] great because on the south of you, you can look to the south and you can see the snow-colored covered Mount Lassen, and you look to the north, you can see the snow-covered Mount Shasta. And it then, there's old barns and corrals and all kinds of stuff along the river and stuff like that.

It's kind of kitschy, but you know, I'm a photographer. I like kitschy stuff. But it's, another thing, it's private property, and so it's, what's unique is that the only way you can fish it, there's no boat ramp, so to speak. There's, Cal Trout, uh, owns some property that you can access the river, and you can put in, uh, an inflatable or some- something, a small pram or something like that.

You got to drag it in. You can't back it in. Uh, but other than that, either you stay at Circle Seven Ranch, which is a gorgeous place to stay, by the way, and they have a little marina, and they'll rent you a boat. Or you have to put in a boat about 10 miles down to the south, and then you [00:30:00] have to motor up.

So it's a very unique place. It's kind of a place where you really kind of need a guide, or unless you stay at Circle Seven, or you need, even if you stay at Circle Seven, you need somebody to... You got to find out where the fish are, because, you know, you got to get that information. And they're everywhere, but if you want to get into good dry fly fishing and things like that, you need a concentration of fish, and you got to learn it.

So, so it's, it's a learn- there's a learning curve to it, but man, is it gorgeous, and the fishing is just very technical at times, but it's, they're there, you know?

D. Roger Maves: Yeah.

Greg Vinci: And so.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah. Yeah. I've heard that, uh, Hot Creek has humbled many experienced anglers. What do you see there? What, why?

Greg Vinci: Well, I th- I think you mean Hat Creek

D. Roger Maves: Oh, Hat Creek?

Greg Vinci: We have two-

D. Roger Maves: Oh, I'm sorry ...

Greg Vinci: Yeah, we have two. It's easy to get confused. Hat Creek is in northeastern California. Hot Creek is in, is along Highway 395 on the east side, [00:31:00] eastern Sierra. So go on. So Hat Creek is, you're right, it has humbled a lot of anglers because Hat Creek is one of those creeks, it's kind of, it's really a spring creek.

It comes down, and a lot of the water comes out of a powerhouse and into a big, long riffle, goes a couple hundred yards, and then it turns into a big flat. And, and so you treat it like it's a technical creek to fish, and maybe one of the most technical creeks that I think I've ever fished. And the problem is is that you have multiple hatches, and hatches can change every 20 minutes, particularly in the evening, and which means you're constantly changing flies.

So it's a crazy place to fish, but it's got a lot of fish, and it's got big fish. And every, all the fish are in there are wild fish, and they were originally... I think Hat Creek has been, it was the very first, I think, uh, uh, catch and release property in [00:32:00] California, uh, going back in the 1970s, I think, early '70s.

So it's really quite a place, and it can draw a bunch of people, but I've never seen it annoyingly, I mean, too many people.

D. Roger Maves: What's the access like there? Is it public access or-

Greg Vinci: Well, it's, it's really quite good. Yeah. It's, uh, the upper part where most of the people go is called the Powerhouse Riffle. And you can drive, there's a, it's a paved road right down to the base of the powerhouse, and you can park there, plenty of parking, overlooking the river.

And then there's another that takes you to Carbon Flats, which is on the other side of the river, uh, down I'd say maybe a mile or so. You go down across the river on the highway, and then you come back up and come up a dirt road. And at Carbon Flats, you fish from that side. It's a very slow, meandering river, and again, lots of hatches. And anytime you got slow water, you're really talking about technical stuff going on. But [00:33:00] it's quite a challenge for a lot of people. So that's the access there, and then there's also some access along, that you're getting back on the west side of the river again, going south of the highway and, the major highway, and you can get down there. You drive down there a ways. I heard they closed some of it off, and I haven't been down there in quite a few years, so I'm not quite sure how far you can drive. But that area's all fishable too. There's a lot of area to fish, and you can get away from people. It's pretty easy

D. Roger Maves: Yeah. Yeah. And by the way, folks, we're only touching on a few of the, you know, highlighting a few of the fisheries in each of these areas. And in Greg's book, there's many, many more fisheries to explore there in all these areas that we're talking about. Don't wanna-- I want you to feel like we're le- we can't go through them all in one night, but-

Greg Vinci: Yeah ...

D. Roger Maves: Kind of give you a taste now and, uh, pick up Greg's book and use that as your guide going through.

Let's take a quick break here, and then we'll [00:34:00] come back, talk about the west, Sierra West Slope and what's going on in that area and what might be enticing to some of our listeners. So hang tight, and we'll be right back.

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If you'd like to ask Greg a question, just go to that, uh, form on our homepage, fill that out, and we'll, uh, we'll try to get your question answered tonight on the show.

Okay, Greg, yeah, Sierra West Slope. We're talking up, well, Yosemite falls in that area, right?

Greg Vinci: Yeah, you're right. Yeah, you have, you know, you... well, I mean, there's a lot of... It, it's a huge, huge area, and very little of it gets fished, so pe- people-

D. Roger Maves: Oh.

Greg Vinci: Yeah. I mean, there, I mean, there's, you know, the West Slope is a spider web of creeks and so on, and you understand that the West Slope is a gradual slope from the valley. It, you know, from the valley, you don't see a lot of tall peaks because they're far away or they're [00:36:00] over an hour drive away because...

But on the way, it's very forested. Once you leave the valley, it's a forest of pine trees, and the reason so it's forested is because the fact that it's, it's a rain shell. The storm come in off the Pacific, right? They dump all their rain before they reach the summit, okay? And then continue on over to the east side, but by then they've dumped all their snow and, or all their rain. So, yeah, it's very lush, and that creates a different kind of environment But there's tons and tons of creeks. There's a lot, I mean, a lot of them are very, very overgrown, which of course can be, creates a major problem for fly fishers and so on. But there's so many roads that go to them, there's plenty to explore.

And, you know, I worked in a fly shop for seven years, and I'm always amazed at how little people know of this area that's actually close to Sacramento. Because, and another thing about it too is that

early in the year when a lot of the, one [00:37:00] of the so-called creeks that everybody wants to go fish are dealing with, what am I gonna say, snow melt issues, a lot of these creeks are, originate under 5,000 feet elevation, and 5,000 feet is pretty much where you find snow collecting and staying there all year.

You don't have much runoff below there. So there's a lot of, lots of fish on the Sierra West slope.

D. Roger Maves: I understand that a lot of people don't fish Yosemite. Why is that? Is it that they're more interested in the rocks or-

Greg Vinci: You know, because they're all ... No, it's because they're all tourists.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah, not fish- not big fish-

Greg Vinci: I'd say 80% of the tourists there are all foreigners, so.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah. Oh.

Greg Vinci: They're not gonna bring gear.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah, yeah. Yeah. Interesting.

Greg Vinci: And, and they're not gonna-

D. Roger Maves: Is it good fishing in the park?

Greg Vinci: What pardon?

D. Roger Maves: Is it good fishing in, in the park?

Greg Vinci: Excellent. It's excellent everywhere you go.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah. Hmm. Okay.

Greg Vinci: Just doesn't get, get the pressure. And as far as, uh, nearby urban [00:38:00] areas, there's really only one that's of any size, and that's f- the city of Fresno.

There's Fresno and Merced, but they're not real big cities. I mean, they're not huge like Sacramento or any of the other big cities. So consequently, say for Sacramento, I mean, you'd be driving like three hours to get there, okay? So that's a little bit-

D. Roger Maves: Yeah ...

Greg Vinci: Too long for a day trip.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah.

Greg Vinci: And so people don't take advantage of it, but it's got really amazing, a lot of small fish. There's a few places where there's some real big fish. The valley, I mean, that's the prettiest spring creek I've ever seen is the Merced River-

D. Roger Maves: Oh, yeah. Yeah ...

Greg Vinci: As it goes through the valley.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah, yeah.

Greg Vinci: And nobody fishes it. Of course, you have rafter problems, raft problems, you know?

D. Roger Maves: Yeah, yeah. Let's talk about the Kern River. I guess it kind of flies under the radar for a lot of folks. What makes it a, kind of a priority stop?

Greg Vinci: Well, I don't know whether it would be a priority stop. It's a good fishery. It, the [00:39:00] highway runs right along it, so the access is very, very easy. It's a relatively smaller river, so it has some pretty much consistent flows, so the wading is easy.

It does get stocked. I believe it's, they're now stocking a, they have a little hatchery there that's trying to perpetuate the indigenous fish from that river. And like I mentioned earlier, one time, this is like 20,000 years ago, but the r- Kern River connected with rivers that went to the ocean, so they had steelhead runs, and they had consequently had, but once the fish got landlocked, were kind of evolved on their own, and they're called redbands.

So they have kind of a unique little fishery there. They have a fly shop there in town, and, and there's also a lake there that offers fishing. But it's a neat place because it's about two hours from the San Fernando Valley or that, the LA area, or it's actually [00:40:00] about three hours from LA. So they get, a lot of people go there.

I think I caught my very first bluegill there-

D. Roger Maves: Like it's spoken.

Greg Vinci: Yeah. You know? Yeah, it's a neat place, and it's a favorite place for a lot of people that live in that southern end of the valley-

D. Roger Maves: Yeah, we had, uh- ...

Greg Vinci: or, or live in northern part of Southern California.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah, we had Brad Holm in San Diego, California write in, and he wanted to know if you have any tips on fishing the current. He says it's an hour closer than to San Diego than the Eastern Sierras, and he was thinking of checking it out. And he, and-

Greg Vinci: Yeah, well, it's really... Yeah, it's, I don't know if it's an hour closer. Yeah. Yeah. I'd say from San Diego, it's gotta be a minimum of six hours to get there, you know?

D. Roger Maves: Mm.

Greg Vinci: It's about three hours from LA, LA area. So-

D. Roger Maves: Yeah ...

Greg Vinci: But it's a, area, it's not a day trip really, but it's, it's an area that's pretty close, and it's decent trout fishing because you don't have, there's nothing south of that, that really could [00:41:00] offer, be worth going to and staying overnight, you know, so to speak-

D. Roger Maves: Yeah ...

Greg Vinci: You know, as a destination. So it's, it's not a bad, I don't mean to degrade it at all because it's, it's really a neat piece of water and so on.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah.

Greg Vinci: But compared to a lot of other waters in the Sierra, I mean, I would say it's above average, but not, not super good.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah.

Greg Vinci: But it's good.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah. The Yuba River Falls in that west slope Sierra area too, right? Tell us about that.

Greg Vinci: Yeah, Yuba, there's two parts to the Yuba. You got the, the Upper Yuba, which the good fishing, you got different forks, let's put it that way.

Run out of the Eastern Sierra, and they run into Bullards Bar Reservoir. There's a couple of reservoirs in, in the bre- But they, North Fork stays cold all summer. The Middle and the South Forks, they get too warm. I mean, they have some big, big fish in there and some big, big browns that can tolerate the warmer water, but I [00:42:00] mean, they're not a big draw.

Okay. And there's some issues with, with, uh, you know, drug people and things like that on, particularly in South Fork. But in the North Fork, it's a real cool place. It's got some beautiful little towns along the way, very scenic, kinda quaint, and the road, highway runs right along it, and several, quite a few campgrounds along there, and you can, where you can drive into, and you can gain access And the fishing is really quite good up in there, and particularly up above Downieville, which is a little town at the, the highest elevation down.

And the further up you go, you get more into wild fish, and Downieville gets planted. And it's a fun place to go. It's a really cool ... And then you have the lower Kern. I said Kern. You have the lower Yuba, which actually I should have really covered it under tailwaters. But the lower Yuba comes out of, uh, Oroville Lake, and

[00:43:00] Excuse me. I'm sorry. Comes out of Englebright Lake. So that's closer to Sacramento. That's like an hour, 15 minutes from Sacramento. And it runs through the old gold fields. And when you go there, I mean, it's very scenic, but down, as it moves into the valley, there's all these mine tailings on both sides of the river where those big dredgers went through and dug up cobblestone and gravel and, and mined the gold dust and stuff like that, and it's still there today. I mean, it's like over 100 years old. But the river is this great, fabulous ... because the water's always cold. It never really warms up. I mean, I don't think it gets above 60 during the summer, and it's a hot place. I mean, we have 105-degree temperatures isn't anything unusual here. But, and because of that cold water, the fish, there's a lot of food for the fish.

There's, they have some great, great hatches. Because of that, the fish are, have a reputation of being the [00:44:00] strongest fighting fish of any of the tailwaters or anywhere, actually, in California. So it's a real neat place. The only downside is that, that it used to be a, there's a road, a county road that ran along the south side of it for years.

And because of problems with off-road people and assorted crimes that were going on in that area, the county closed it about four or five years ago. So consequently, the access is kinda limited and so on. So, es- which is really sad, because here you got this trophy fishery. But at the same time, it's a really a great place to go.

D. Roger Maves: Which of the rivers in the Western Slope here, like the ones we've talked about and so forth, and maybe it's the Yuba, you know, offers the best balance of scenery, solitude, and fishing access and success?

Greg Vinci: You know, again, that's a hard question to ask. That being said, I think if you want to balance scenery and fish, [00:45:00] quality of fishery, I would, I think that like the Truckee River would be one of them.

D. Roger Maves: Mm-hmm.

Greg Vinci: It runs into Nevada, and that's a great winter fishery down there. Uh, the Carson-

D. Roger Maves: That's the Eastern Sierra, though, right?

Greg Vinci: Yeah.

D. Roger Maves: That's the Eastern Sierra.

Greg Vinci: Yeah, I mean-

D. Roger Maves: I'm talking about the West Slope.

Greg Vinci: Oh, on the West Slope. I'm sorry.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah. Where we were just talking about, yeah.

Greg Vinci: Yeah, I mean, I think the, the Yuba River, I mean, of course you could float it and get, go everywhere on it. I mean, that's one of the great ones. The, the Feather River, or particularly the low-flow section of the Feather, that's just exceptional, and it has probably the most consistently good tailwater.

I would... I'm not mentioning the Lower Sac, even though thousands of people go there, because it can be the best place in the world, but it can be a little inconsistent.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah.

Greg Vinci: And then the American River, it is sometimes kind of overlooked by people, but you know, it's an urban fishery. It has a solid runs [00:46:00] of salmon, steelhead, and shad, and stripers every year. And, uh, you know, you get great information about what's going on at any given time. Uh, you can, you know, have a great fishery.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah. Okay, okay. Let's talk about Eastern Sierra now. You had-

Greg Vinci: Mm-hmm ...

D. Roger Maves: You just started to talk about Truckee, um, and that is a beautiful river. I was over there, um, a couple years ago, and actually staying in Reno, and was surprised at, uh, how the Truckee flows through the city.

There, they've, uh, done all kinds of structure, and I looked out my hotel window and I see somebody, uh, walking out of the water and out of their waders, fishing right downtown Reno. So I don't know how good the fishing there was, but, um, but anyway.

Greg Vinci: Well, I think quite good. Yeah.

D. Roger Maves: Is it? Yeah?

Greg Vinci: They... well, yeah, they plant fish down in that part of the river.

The area upstream from Reno, and now let's keep in mind that, you know, when you have super cold weather up in Truckee, which is at about the 7,000-foot [00:47:00] elevation, in the town of Truckee, in that area, which is where a lot of the fishing goes on-

D. Roger Maves: Right ...

Greg Vinci: Reno can be quite a bit warmer. I mean, it could be, you know, at least 20 degrees warmer at times, depending on the time of the year.

So the winter fishery tends to be pretty good down there, and it can be great because there's a lot of... You got two things going. One, there's a number of fish that will migrate out of the cold water of the east slope, and they'll go down into that area. And also you have, because the water tends to get warmer in the summer, and the fact that brown trout are more tolerant of warm water, you have a lot of brown trout, and you got some very, very big brown trout and, and so on.

And then, then, and they exist all, you know, for quite a few miles downstream from Truckee. And so it's a pretty amazing place. And I should mention another thing too, which is a little bit off track here, but the Truckee River runs into Pyramid Lake, and Pyramid Lake has a [00:48:00] fabulous Lahontan cutthroat fishery.

I mean, big, big fish. I mean, a lot of fish 10-pound range. And that's a very, very popular place for fly fishermen. But, um-

D. Roger Maves: Right ...

Greg Vinci: anyway, getting back to, you know, what we're talking about, yeah, the Truckee's a great, great water and offers a lot of opportunity regardless of the season, and so on, so.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah. Hmm, interesting. Yeah, I guess the fishing on the Truckee can be tough. I guess as any fishery can be.

Steve Schram in Northern California wrote in. He says, "Sometimes I do well fishing the Truckee, and I'll start to think that I've got it figured out, but then on my next trip I'll get blanked and I feel completely lost.

I usually fish it in August, September, and October. Can you provide some pointers on what I should be doing or looking for to be more consistent?" He says, "I like-

Greg Vinci: Yeah, I- "...

D. Roger Maves: Fishing streamers as well as doing nymphing and, but usually don't dry fly."

Greg Vinci: Yeah, the thing about the Truckee is that you gotta keep in mind that it warms up even though it's [00:49:00] pretty high elevation.

Another thing too is that most of the hatches are done by the end of July. So the fish aren't seeing a lot of bugs, emergers, and a lot of bugs around the water. I mean, what they see is a lot of little itchy bitsy caddis and mayflies, but they're really super tiny and they're really not a big food source.

So then they start looking for something to eat, and one of the things that's there is, is big food sources is crawdads. And there's a lot of crawdads in Truckee. And crawdads-

D. Roger Maves: Mm-hmm ...

Greg Vinci: you know, range in size. Crawdads that spawn in the, or hatch in the spring about, you know, end of, end of August, you got crawdads that these little crawdads are maybe two or three

inches long, and they're wiggling around, and they almost look like little sculpins almost. But there are a lot of them in the water, and the fish are really onto them. And another thing too is they're onto the big ones too. You know, the big crawdads, they'll be onto them also if they're present. So those are the kind of fa- those are the, the [00:50:00] bugs, so to speak. They're not a bug, but you know, like, well, they look like a bug. Um-

D. Roger Maves: Kinda, yeah. Yeah.

Greg Vinci: Yeah, you know, that are very present in that river, and you could do very well with. So strip and streamers can be very productive during that time. You're gonna strip them really slow, 'cause the fish are gonna be kind of lethargic too, because it's warmer water. But, you know, fish, you start fishing the deep holes.

Another thing too is that the water down in the canyon is much colder. When you get down into the canyon near Fair Ad or, um, I'm having, I'm totally forgot about one of the spots, but, by then, there's tributaries, there's Prosser Creek, and there's Little Truckee have run, provided cooler water into the river.

And even the flows are up, but, uh, you can fish it, and, uh, fish are much more active as you get later in the summer. So you gotta keep that in mind. So a lot of, like, nymphing and things [00:51:00] like that aren't gonna be as productive, though they may, you know, if you... I mean, you could do well nymphing a little tiny midge-sized pattern, fishing stuff in the 20 to 22 range, because a lot of the mayflies are, that's what the size they are during that time, or the, the caddis. So that's-

D. Roger Maves: Right ...

Greg Vinci: My best advice-

D. Roger Maves: Yeah ...

Greg Vinci: During that time of year.

D. Roger Maves: That's good. Yeah, yeah. Let's talk about some of the other fisheries over there on the Eastern Sierra. The Truckee was one. East Walker, you kinda highlighted that one.

Greg Vinci: Yeah, East Walker, I think, you know, arguably it may be the most prolific river over there, and the reason is, is that I think most fly fishermen from intermediate on, you know, and above, all right, can do well there. It's not real technical, okay? And it has a lot of fish. They have a lot of, almost all brown [00:52:00] trout.

They're basically wild, though the river does get supplemented with fish every few years, but they just, they throw in fingerlings. So those fish are, you know, have wild characteristics. They're mostly bro- I said, already said they're mostly brown.

The highway runs alongside of it, lot of easy access. And, and I'm talking about mainly the California side, and there's a lot of big fish. And as long as there's cold water coming out of that, out of the

dam, Bridgeport Reservoir, the fishing is usually really good. And then when it gets into Nevada, about the first three miles is a private pay-to-play.

It's, actually it's a cattle ranch, but it's a private pay-to-play, which is relatively cheap. I think it's around 100 a day, or 100 per rod. But it's got some great, great water. And then there's public water. And the next, I think, eight miles from their property downstream is what's called, we always called it Rasashi Ranch, but it's all owned by the, I think [00:53:00] Forest Service owns it.

The, uh, NDOW, which is a fish and wildlife agency in Nevada, runs it, and it's all wild trout fishery, and it's got fabulous fishing. It's running right through the desert, meandering through the desert, and it's got some freestone in between. It's got a lot of really good hatches, and it's got a lot of browns, a lot of really big browns.

So I think that river overall, I would say... Oh, and then well, I want to say one last thing is that, that that section of the river stays open all year, where-

D. Roger Maves: Hmm ...

Greg Vinci: Okay, and, uh, where the California side doesn't. But during the winter, when the California side, it could be down close to freezing or below freezing in the morning, that could be 20 degrees warmer down there.

So, so consequently, the, you know, the better times of the year to fish it are like March and April.

D. Roger Maves: Hmm. Okay.

Greg Vinci: Um, you know, those kinds of times. So that, I would say that would be my... I'd rate it at the top.

D. Roger Maves: You would? Okay. Okay. Now this is where Hot Creek is, not the [00:54:00] con- where I confused everybody earlier.

Greg Vinci: Right, you got it right.

D. Roger Maves: With Hat Creek.

Greg Vinci: Yeah. About time

D. Roger Maves: So this is where Hot Creek is. What can you tell us about Hot Creek as one of your-

Greg Vinci: Yeah, I think it's like the, it's the big pearl in the string of pearls, if you want to relate it to the different creeks and rivers on the east side. And the reason I say that, the, I've never seen a place that had more dramatic scenery and so unique as Hot Creek.

And the reason is it, it's called Hot Creek is because it's actually Mammoth Creek, comes out of the Sierras, go- runs through the town of Mammoth Lakes, and down into the valley. And there, the

water will warm up a little bit because the fact you got all this geothermal activity that exists down there.

Actually, below it is the Long Valley caldera, or caldera, which is deemed as one of the most likely places to blow up next, okay, within the United States. All right?

D. Roger Maves: Nice.[00:55:00]

Greg Vinci: All right.

D. Roger Maves: Nice to know.

Greg Vinci: So you didn't know that. And the underlying the whole thing is that the city of Mammoth or somebody built a road that, this is like 20 years ago, but it goes from Mammoth and goes around the backside.

It gets you back to Highway 395. They call it the Scenic Road or the Minaret Road, but actually, you know, it's an escape route. So- So someday it'll happen. Anyway, that being said, so the water goes down into the valley there, and then runs by the hatchery and, and so it warms up along the way. So, so you have nice, warm, relatively warm water in the 50s all through the winter.

And when you get down in the canyon there, it's been sculpted. It's just the most beautiful walls of this canyon. Probably not that deep, maybe a couple hundred feet down. But you can walk along it. There's a good trail. You don't have to get in the water. There's not a lot of foliage. There's no pine trees around or anything to get you screwed up [00:56:00] on a back cast.

And at the lower end, actually, there's hot, you know, pools and stuff like that, and steam coming up. It's scenic, and there's vents, and as you walk along it, you can smell sulfur coming out of little cracks. So it's just really unique. But at the same time, it's a wild trout fishery, though it does get supplemented if necessary. And-

D. Roger Maves: Okay ...

Greg Vinci: It's very, very technical. And-

D. Roger Maves: Okay ...

Greg Vinci: The reason is because there are a lot of weed beds, and you gotta be able to get around those weed beds. And even where you can get... If you can get, like, a four-inch drift, you're doing good.

D. Roger Maves: Geez.

Greg Vinci: All right?

D. Roger Maves: Yeah, that's tough.

Greg Vinci: Okay. And, and the fish are so used to seeing leader that you basically have to do a downstream drift in order to get them to grab.

They gotta see that fly first. So y- that's what you're up against. But you can still catch fish, and they're nice.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah.

Greg Vinci: It depends on the era. Right now the fish are, I'd say, I'd say a 12-inch fish, [00:57:00] uh, 12 to 14-inch fish would be your trophy out of there right now, but I've seen pictures of huge fish in there, too.

During the years I fished it, it was mostly, you know, fish in that, you know, that 12-inch range or so.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah.

Greg Vinci: You know, eight to 12. But there's a lot of, I mean, there's a lot of fish, 4,000 fish per mile. It's just that it's, it's so technical.

D. Roger Maves: It's tough, yeah.

Greg Vinci: It's well worth going there. It's, it's ... Actually, the cover of my book is a picture of Hot Creeks.

D. Roger Maves: Oh.

Greg Vinci: Yeah.

D. Roger Maves: Oh, that's, that's gorgeous.

Greg Vinci: Yeah.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah. Gorgeous scenery.

Greg Vinci: Yeah.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah, really green along the banks there.

Greg Vinci: Yeah, it is. And we know what those are.

D. Roger Maves: As it takes-

Greg Vinci: Those are all stinging nettles.

D. Roger Maves: Oh. Oh, okay.

Greg Vinci: Yeah, they're all nettles, so that's something to think about. I don't know whether it's a good idea to, to go down there wearing, uh, shorts.

D. Roger Maves: Shorts. But- Yeah, yeah. Brad Holm in San Diego also asked what are some of your under-the-radar spots in the Eastern Sierras?

Greg Vinci: You want my secret?[00:58:00]

D. Roger Maves: He didn't say secret. Just said under the radar.

Greg Vinci: I'm doing this for free.

Um, you know, I have to give it a little bit of thought here. You know, let me think here. Secret, se- you know, I would say kind of secret spots are places that actually was quite famous at one time, not because of the fishing, because it, it was seminal in the, the changing of the attitude of the LA Department of Water and Power regarding, uh, you know, uh, uh, diverting water. But there's a, a place called Rush Creek, and Rush Creek, there's a town of Levining. So, uh, if, if you know where Mono Lake is, which is a, like, a dead lake so to speak, but it's, uh, very important ecologically, and the town of Levining, which is the s- or the eastern portal to Yosemite. Okay? Then if you go south about five miles, there's a creek that runs under the [00:59:00] highway, and it's called Rush Creek, and, and it runs into Mono Lake.

And Rush Creek, it has a wild population of brown trout, and it has rainbows in it, too, and they're all kind of small, I mean, like, you know, about eight to 10 inches, but it's prolific. And the thing is that people, thousands of people drive, or fishermen drive over that bridge, crosses it every year, and never, don't know it exists, but yet it's there, and it's, it has really a good fishery from there to the dam.

And then there's several lakes along it. So there's what's known as June Lake Loop, which is a circle or kind of half circle that, that goes to the west from Highway 395 towards the mountains and then comes back to Highway 395 after about 20 miles, and the river runs, or the creek runs kind of along it, and it runs from lake to lake, and anywhere upstream from those lakes, they have a great runs of brown trout in the autumn.

D. Roger Maves: Hmm.

Greg Vinci: So it's quite [01:00:00] a, it's an underused fishery. People don't think about it-

D. Roger Maves: Yeah ...

Greg Vinci: And don't go there, and I'd never seen anybody other than me and my buddy, you know, on that creek.

D. Roger Maves: Hmm. Interesting. Yeah.

Greg Vinci: So that would be one of the secrets that, and then McGee Creek is another.

D. Roger Maves: And that's in your book? Yeah.

Greg Vinci: Yeah.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah. And it's in, it's in your book.

Greg Vinci: Yeah. And then McGee Creek is another one that's actually now is sort of a local, supposed to be a local secret, but everybody knows about it, which is a, kind of a, quite a g- really good creek, particularly, uh, when fish are running up to spawn. Hopefully everybody knows what a, that we're talking and knows what a spawning red looks like so we don't disturb fish that are actually-

D. Roger Maves: Right

Greg Vinci: Trying to spawn.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah.

Greg Vinci: But a lot of the big fish will come out of Lake Crowley up into there, and, and then that would be browns in the fall and cutthroat and rainbows in the spring. And I think they got Eagle Lake rainbows too. I don't know what time of the spring they come out, but those are a couple little things.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah.

Greg Vinci: And a lot of small [01:01:00] creeks just don't get the popularity, 'cause everybody goes over there to fish Hot Creek and the Owens River and, you know-

D. Roger Maves: And Truckee and, yeah ...

Greg Vinci: And the, the name places.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah.

Greg Vinci: And I think over 90% of the waters in the Sierra never see a, a fly fisherman.

D. Roger Maves: Oh, interesting. Yeah. Well, we got one more spot.

Greg Vinci: I mean, people gotta get out and ... The, people gotta get, gotta get out and go exploring.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah.

Greg Vinci: Particularly the younger ones, you know?

D. Roger Maves: Yeah. Yeah. Okay, we got one more spot, the North Coast rivers. Trinity, Klamath, Russian River. Let's talk about those. Let's talk about Trinity first. What makes it special?

Greg Vinci: Yeah, the Trinity is unique in that- It starts near the top of the coast range, okay?

So it's not very far from I-5. I mean, it's only like a half hour drive to, you know, you're in the town of Redding, and then you travel up to the west. And then everything flows to the west from the Trinity because they're on the other side of the [01:02:00] crest. But it receives, it has a couple lakes upstream from it, and it has a steady flow of water, and the flows are pretty, are, are consistent. It doesn't dry up in, at the end of the summer.

And so during the summertime it has a wild trout population, it has a good brown trout population for fishing. And then, then as when we get into the fall, then it gets a somewhat of a half pounder run. And a half pounder run is, if you've heard the term, half pounders aren't a half a pound, they're actually about, uh, two pounds, okay? They're around 20 inches, 20 to 22 inches. And they're an immature steelhead that, a two-year-old steelhead that's been to the ocean, and they come back up the rivers, not to spawn, they, because the water temperatures are good and because there's food and for a variety of reasons. That happens in the fall.

And then you have a summer run of fish that comes [01:03:00] in in the summer around July, and they hang out on the river until spring in order to spawn. And so you got two runs that are there during the fall, and then you have a few adult fish that are winter spawners that are starting to come in. So when you get into October, November, you got a lot of steelhead in that river.

And so it's really quite a fishery. And again, it's easy to drive to. It's low enough in the fall to where you can do bank fishing or the spey guides will have a ball down on the river. Plenty places, plenty of access. And then when the water gets a little higher, I mean, you know, you can, there's a lot of guides that float the river too.

That would be, that's one of them, okay?

D. Roger Maves: Yeah.

Greg Vinci: Uh, that's the way I could tell you about the Trinity.

D. Roger Maves: Now the, yeah, the Klamath, in fact, I did a show with Mikey Weir on-

Greg Vinci: Mm-hmm ...

D. Roger Maves: Uh, you know, Klamath Reborn. This is one of the ones that has made the news a [01:04:00] lot because they've been removing dams and-

Greg Vinci: Uh-huh ...

D. Roger Maves: And restoring the river, so which sounds, it's super exciting to me to hear about that.

So yeah, kind of fill us on on what's happened with the Klamath.

Greg Vinci: Well, yeah, they did. They removed all the dams all the way up to Klamath Falls, and so in Oregon. And it's been a success as far as what, what we read, you know. I mean, I gotta figure half of what I read is propaganda. But at the same time, there's no question, uh, you know, that, uh, quite a few salmon made it up into that area, and so on. So that's a really a good sign.

And so we'll see how the fishery is because the area that went by Interstate I-5, which is north of Mount Shasta, okay, about another 30 miles north, there was a dam there. It was called Iron Gate Dam, and downstream from it was a real popular fishery, and a lot of guides floated it, and people [01:05:00] fished it because the fish couldn't really go any further.

And it's gonna be interesting to see what's happened. The other issue, it has to do with the, the silt that was released into the river because of the, you know, because when the dams got removed, there's all this silt behind them. So we're gonna see how that affects the, has affected the spawning of salmon this last fall.

So it's kind of all up in the air. This is, I think it's gonna be a key year. Uh, the last thing is that I remember I was talking about half pounders, and the most famous thing that the Klamath is known for is the half pounder steelhead, more so than the winter steelhead. And the reason for that is that during the winter when the big adult fish that, like the, you know, the six to 10 pound fish come in on that river, a lot of times that river is blown out, and during a lot of years in the midwinter.

And consequently, so it hasn't developed a huge following of people that fish it. But what is [01:06:00] good is in the fall before the river blows, you have what a half pounder run, and it's enormous. I mean, thousands and thousands of half pounders come in the river and run way up to probably 50, 60 yard, I mean, 60 miles up the river and, uh, all the way up to Marble Mountain.

And there's so many of them in there, and the fishing is fabulous during those times. So we're gonna see what happens this year because-

D. Roger Maves: Yeah ...

Greg Vinci: We're only a couple of years since they took out the dams, and see if all those fish go back up into that area.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah, I imagine- But, uh- ... that's gonna take quite a few years for the fish to-

Greg Vinci: Yeah. You don't know- To re- ... though, you know? You just don't know.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah.

Greg Vinci: So, so-

D. Roger Maves: Yeah, a couple spawns up there, and then start, uh, building up the traffic coming back in.

Greg Vinci: Yeah.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah, yeah.

Greg Vinci: Yeah.

D. Roger Maves: It'll be fun to watch.

Greg Vinci: And I think, I think also the-

D. Roger Maves: If it works out, you know?

Greg Vinci: I think the, the Indians', uh, tribes that's in that area, I can't remember what they're called, but I think they have a hatchery [01:07:00] up there by where the Iron Gate Dam used to be.

And so that's gonna supplement too. I don't know if they're gonna do anything about steelhead though. I think, you know, they're more interested in the salmon returns, but-

D. Roger Maves: In the salmon, yeah. Yeah.

Greg Vinci: Yeah.

D. Roger Maves: Okay, one more. Russian River. Let's finish up with the Russian River on our California trip here. What's special about it? Why would we wanna fish it?

Greg Vinci: Well, I tell you, the Russian River was one of the most famous steelhead and salmon rivers in the United States back in the pre-1950s And I mean, famous, you know, famous writers wrote about Russell Chapman was a real famous writer at the time, and fishermen that wrote in Sports Illustrated and all these magazines.

I mean, it was really world-renowned. And then all these wineries went in, all these vineyards got planted, okay? And people moved in. And what happened is that the tributaries of the river were... [01:08:00] Let me see how, how's our time here? We got a couple minutes. But the tributaries is where the coho salmon would spawn, and they got kind of messed up because they got dried up because of the wells that sucked up the water, and so on.

So anyway, the jump to the chase, the river's not what it used to be. But on a good year, and this last year was pretty decent because we had a good water flow early in the season. And part of the problem is if, if you have a good water flow, it blows out the sandbar at the mouth, and that allows steelhead to come in.

And on dry years, the f- steelhead can't come up. So it ended up being pretty decent, and it's a relatively long river. I think it runs about 180 miles, and there's areas where there's, there's some good ripple water in there as more so as you move up. And there's areas where the fish will hold on, you know, along the way, and they do pretty good in there.

But you kind of, you really need local information before you go. I mean, I [01:09:00] wouldn't go, I mean, there's, you know, there's, uh, the sporting goods stores and things like that in the area that, you know, have all that information. And they can go to my website, too, and during the steelhead season, I keep the Russian River page well up to date on what's going on, and so on. It also has shad, shad fishing, too. Okay.

D. Roger Maves: Why don't you, um, just take a moment and tell people how best and how, you know, the best use case for getting your book on exploring California. What can they expect out of your book, and how useful would it be?

Greg Vinci: Well, it covers 50 different waters. Many, all the ones we talked about tonight are listed in it.

And again, you're gonna get all the information you get that I think that you're gonna need. It, it has QR codes on each map, which you can scan with your phone and see a satellite view of the area that's depicted on the map. So you can zoom in and zoom out. It has GPS coordinates that you can use. [01:10:00] It also has a part, it has a section of, on each water that tells you about, uh, regulations and tells about cost of, fishing licenses and information about lodging and all those kind of things. So it pretty... I tried to make it so that it tells you everything. And also the, in the text, it talks about- It's not just a, it's not, I tried to not keep it dry. I mean, I tried to tell a story about, to add some of my recollections of times I've spent on these various rivers, and it gives you all, I think, all the information about, there's hatch charts and when to fish and so on. So I hope it's everything that you need. So I hope it is, so.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah. Yeah. Oh, good.

Greg Vinci: And it's available if they need it or wanna buy one, you can go to my website, californiaflyfishingreports.com, and there's an ad on the banner at the upper right, and there's a link you can click on if you wanna order one. And you can contact the publisher, [01:11:00] as Roger said.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah.

Greg Vinci: Um, and if you go to my Substack page, again, that's gregvinci.substack.com. If you go to my page, there's information on there. If you scroll down, you'll come to an ad that'll have a link to where you can order also.

D. Roger Maves: Okay. Great. Great. Well, thanks for sharing that. Well, we gotta wrap it up here 'cause we've run out of time.

But yeah, stick with us here, Greg, until the end. We're gonna give away a copy of your book.

Greg Vinci: Yeah.

D. Roger Maves: Um, and folks, we're gonna give away a couple other prizes here as well, one-year membership to Trout Unlimited and one-year membership to Fly Fishers International. So stick around a couple more minutes and we'll do just that and be giving away Greg's book, Complete Guide to California Fly Fishing.

Yeah. 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 [01:12:00] funding to restore Florida's Everglades and estuaries. Thanks to their members, they've expanded their 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 fisheries 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. It says, "What'd you think of the show?" Just click on that link and leave your comments. We'd really appreciate it. So now it's time to give away our prizes. The winners for our drawings are randomly selected from the show's registration database.

If you didn't register for the 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 a chance to win one of these great prizes. If you are one of the lucky winners, we'll contact you [01:13:00] after the show and collect in- your information so that we can deliver your prizes to you.

First thing we're giving away is a one-year membership to Fly Fishers International. And to learn more about Fly Fishers International, go to flyfishersinternational.org, flyfishersinternational.org, and you can check out what they're doing. Very good organization to support. Our winner there is John Bennett in Ohio. John Bennett in Ohio. So congratulations, John. I know you'll enjoy your membership.

Next prize we're giving away is a one-year membership to Trout Unlimited, and to find out more about Trout Unlimited, go to tu.org. And another great organization to support, does a lot of things for us fly fishers. And our winner for that is Mark Smeltzer. Mark Smeltzer in Oregon. Mark Smeltzer. So enjoy your, uh, membership to that as well, Mark.

And now we'll give away a copy of Greg's book, A Complete Guide to California Fly Fishing, courtesy [01:14:00] Wild River Press at wildriverpress.com.

And the way we do this is I'm gonna ask a question, and you gotta fill out that form on our homepage that the same one that you could ask questions in. And the first person to answer the, that provides their name, location, and the correct answer will win a copy of Greg's book, A Complete Guide to California Fly Fishing.

So the question is If you're fishing late summer, August, September-ish, October-ish, and nymphing isn't working out, what might you want to switch to as far as an imitation? What might be, uh, the best thing to use to catch more fish? And Greg helped one of our callers with that question, so with his answer, I should say.

So Greg, we have to wait just a second for them to hear the question.

Greg Vinci: Mm-hmm.

D. Roger Maves: There's a little bit of a delay, [01:15:00] and then we have to wait for them to type in their answer. So let's see if we can't get a winner here. I think I asked the question well enough to, to get an answer out of these, and let's see what we get here.

Nothing yet. Oh, looks like we might have the answer here. I got crawdad. Is that what I was looking for, Greg?

Greg Vinci: I think you got it. That was the key, the key point I made.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah, that was the key, yeah.

Greg Vinci: Yeah. Yeah, you win.

D. Roger Maves: So we got ... That's Bob Younger. Bob Younger in Indianapolis.

Greg Vinci: Well, congratulations.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah. Yeah, Bob, you got a ways to go, but I'm sure you can get out there to California and, uh, get some fishing in, so enjoy your book.

Send me your, um, your information, Bob, in the same form that you just sent it. Send me your shipping address so that I can get Wild River Press to send that out to you. Thanks for paying attention and playing, and appreciate that. [01:16:00]

Greg, thank you so much for being on the show, and I can't believe what an encyclopedia of California fishing you are, rattling off all that information off the top of your head. I couldn't believe it.

Greg Vinci: Yeah, I think rattling is probably a good term. Uh, hey, listen, thank you very, very much. I really appreciate you having me on. I really had a good time.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah, lots of fun. I mean, uh, California's just a wealth of fishing. Like you said, so much of it isn't fished, and you gave people a good taste. All they have to do is get your book and, and go exploring, and I think they'll have a great time.

Greg Vinci: Oh, good. Good.

D. Roger Maves: Yep.

Greg Vinci: Well, make sure you stay in touch.

D. Roger Maves: Will do.

Hopefully, all of you have found the podcast archive on our website. If you haven't, just look for the link at the top line menu. In the archive, you'll find all of our past shows, over 430 some shows, I think.

You can search by keyword, keyword phrase, that kind of thing. So go ahead and explore. Think you'll be excited about what you find. Our next broadcast will be on June 24th, 7:00 PM Mountain, 9:00 PM [01:17:00] Eastern Time. On that interview, I'll be interviewing Frank Foster, and our show will be Bonefish Dreams: Chasing the Gray Ghost Around the World.

What is it about bonefish that inspires anglers to travel thousands of miles, endure endless flights, and return to the flats year after year? Frank Foster shares unforgettable stories, legendary guides, hard-earned lessons, and the adventures that fueled nearly four decades of chasing the elusive gray ghost from The Bahamas and Cuba to the Seychelles and beyond.

Whether you're a seasoned flats angler or dreaming of your first bonefish trip, this episode will inspire your next adventure. Be sure to add it to your calendar by using that calendar link underneath Frank's photograph on the homepage of our website. Just click that Add to Calendar, and you'll be all set.

I'd like to thank Fly Fishers International, Trout Unlimited, Bonefish and Tarpon Trust, Olympic Peninsula Skagit Tactics, The Ugly Bug Fly Shop, and Watermaster for sponsoring our [01:18:00] 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. Good night, everyone, and good fishing.