

# Bonefish Dreams: Chasing the Grey Ghost Around the World

## With Frank Foster

**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 Frank Foster, and he'll be answering your questions on Bonefish Dreams. This show will be 90 minutes in length, and we're broadcasting live over the internet.

If you'd like to ask Frank a question, just go to our homepage at [askaboutflyfishing.com](http://askaboutflyfishing.com) and use the 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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In fact, if you have a moment, do it right now while you're enjoying the show. We'd really appreciate it. The content of this broadcast is copyrighted as the property of The Knowledge Group Inc., doing business as Ask About Fly Fishing. When we return, we'll be talking with Frank Foster about Bonefish Dreams

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Before we introduce Frank, I'd like to let you know about the great prizes we have to give away tonight. On our drawing tonight, we'll be giving away a one-year membership to Fly Fishers International and a one-year membership to Trout Unlimited.

Now, if you haven't registered yet for the drawing, you can do so now. Just go to our homepage at [askaboutflyfishing.com](http://askaboutflyfishing.com) and look for the link under tonight's section that says register for our free drawing. Click on that link, fill out the form, and we'll announce the winners at the end of the show.

We'll also be giving away a copy of Frank's book, *Bonefish Dreams: Stories, Facts, and Tips from Travels to the World's Best Destinations*, courtesy of Stackpole Books.

Now, here's how you can win Frank's book. You must be the first person to answer the question I ask at the end of the show. The question will be about something that Frank and I talk about during the show. You must submit your answer, along with your name and location, using that text [00:03:00] box on our homepage.

It's the same text box you can ask questions in during the show. So listen closely, use your best typing skills, take notes, pay attention, and maybe you'll be the proud owner of Frank's book, *Bonefish Dreams: Stories, Facts, and Tips from Travels to the Best Destinations*.

Tonight, our guest is Frank Foster. Frank was chairman and CEO of one of America's fastest-growing small public companies. After his company was acquired, he became a commercial real estate investor, developer, and independent venture capitalist. He enjoys life now as a published author, and lives with his wife in Central Florida and the mountains of North Carolina as he writes, fly fishes, enjoys his wine cellars, and plays golf with his treasured friends.

Frank, welcome to Ask About Fly Fishing Internet Radio.

**Frank Foster:** It's a pleasure to be with you tonight. Thank you.

**D. Roger Maves:** Yeah, hold on a second here. I have to make an [00:04:00] adjustment. Something's, uh, not coming through on my headset here. Give me a second

Okay, let's try that now. Okay, sorry about that, Frank. Yeah, so, um, bonefish. You recently wrote or published the book, probably took a while to write but recently published the book, *Bonefish Dreams*, and you are obsessed with those bonefish. You know, for someone who hasn't fished for them in the, uh, you know, what makes them such a special and addictive game fish?

**Frank Foster:** Well, probably the best testimonial to that fact can be found before my book even begins. Uh, as many authors do, have two, three quotations from, uh, well-known people before the first chapter. Have one from Norman [00:05:00] Maclean, Tom Brokaw, Lee Wulf, but I'm sure most anglers recognize the name Lefty Kreh, and here's a quotation from Lefty, the late Lefty Kreh, "If I only had one day left to fish, it would have to be chasing some bonefish around a flat."

That from a- ... a legend, uh, a late legend who has cast flies probably in more countries than one can count, and at more species than one perhaps know even exists. But yet, if he had one day to fish, he'd go after bonefish. And why is that? Well, probably two things come to my mind, and bonefishing to me sort of spoils one for any other kind of fishing because it's all sight [00:06:00] fishing.

You don't cast unless or until you see a fish. And the other thing is, when you do hook up, bonefish have a top-end speed of, what would you guess? I'll tell you, 41 miles an hour.

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

**Frank Foster:** So it's never in doubt, unless you catch a little dink of a pound or so, which is rare, it's never in doubt as to whether you're gonna get on the reel, as it might be in trout fishing or some other.

As soon as you hook up, the first task at hand is line management, to make sure you're clear to land, you're on the reel, and then it's tip up and just hang on for dear life- ... while 41 miles an hour of, of run by a large fish takes over.

**D. Roger Maves:** Yeah, yeah. That's exciting, right? I know [00:07:00] for most people that have hooked one, that's really nothing like it.

And also it seems to me, you know, where you're fishing is always so pretty. You know, you're on the flat- Turquoise water, hopefully not too much wind, right?

**Frank Foster:** Well, I've, I've seen anglers, trout anglers and saltwater flats anglers almost come to blows over which fishing environment is more beautiful, and I personally prefer the flats. I just think there's nothing like it, particularly since it's a all-day pass to nature's saltwater aquarium with all these wild critters that are in, uh, vodka clear water that you can just observe at your leisure without... And until you run up on one and they spook, it's voyeuristic.

**D. Roger Maves:** Right. Right. Yeah. [00:08:00] Now, in your book, you've been all over the world fishing for bonefish, and by the way, if people don't know, Frank is donating all the proceeds, sales of his book, Bonefish Dreams, to Bonefish and Tarpon Trust.

**Frank Foster:** Let me just stop you there if I may. I'm not donating the proceeds 'cause I don't sell books. The publisher sells the books, and they pay me a royalty on those sales as the author, but I have committed to donate 100% of those author royalties to the-

**D. Roger Maves:** Right. Right ...

**Frank Foster:** Conservation organization Bonefish and Tarpon Trust, and if some of your listeners are not familiar with it, it's sort of the saltwater flats equivalent of Ducks Unlimited is maybe the best way to describe it.

**D. Roger Maves:** Yeah. Yeah. Help them preserve bonefish, tarpon, permit, all those flats fish. Great organization to support. So yeah, well, thank you for doing that, and thanks for correcting me on that. [00:09:00] So all over, you know, around the world you've chased these bonefish and which you cover in your book extensively, and they're often referred to as ghosts of the flats.

What should anglers understand about their behavior, and where do they get that name ghosts of the flats?

**Frank Foster:** Well, it's probably because they have a remarkable ability to blend in with the bottom, a natural camouflage. And the most maddening thing about it sometimes, when you're looking and

seeing a bonefish on the flat and he's not perpendicular to you, in other words, he's either coming at you or going away from you, they have a dark gray, almost black strip.

It's not a strip, it's just that their back is darker in color than the sides, and so they're much easier to see. But when they turn [00:10:00] sideways, sometimes they just simply vanish. You just can't pick them up anymore, and that's very challenging, maddening, frustrating, but in its own way, delightful.

**D. Roger Maves:** You know, it's always a thing when you're out with the guides, whether it's bonefish or permit or whatever fish, the guides can see these fish that you can't see at all.

Have you learned some, over the years of doing this again and again, tricks to seeing those fish, or have you-

**Frank Foster:** Well, the guides- ...

**D. Roger Maves:** eye dev- developments?

**Frank Foster:** The guides have the advantage of being, if you're poling, much higher than you are. They also have the advantage of being out there almost every day looking for them, and they're better at it.

But as far as tricks to see them, just experience [00:11:00] and making sure you have the best available polarized glasses that you can buy.

**D. Roger Maves:** Yeah. Yeah. What are some of the biggest misconceptions freshwater fly fishers have when they first try fly fishing for bonefish? What kinda things don't transfer over and what are new?

**Frank Foster:** Well, most of them don't realize that, you can't go out there on a saltwater flat that's perfectly wide open for the most part, unless you're right up against the lee shore of a mangrove bank, and they think they can cast and fish the fish the same way as trout. And most of them are in for a rude awakening.

**D. Roger Maves:** In what ways?

**Frank Foster:** Well, they ... A lot of trout anglers are not even familiar with the double haul, which gives you extra distance, particularly [00:12:00] into the wind. And there's a common expression used to, unfortunately too often by bonefish guides with trout anglers who are trying to make the transition. You know, a guide is always barking orders to the angler.

Some of them bark, some of them just say it gently. But a trout angler hears this too often, "No trout set."

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

**Frank Foster:** You know, barked at them, because in any saltwater fishing, almost any that I know of, the, uh, hook set is done with a strip, with the rod continued to be down, you know, to be parallel with the water's surface.

Whereas, as you know I'm sure, with trout fishing, the first thing you do when you get a [00:13:00] take is you lift the rod. Depending on the circumstance, you may lift it sharply if it's a, uh, the trout has taken the nymph, you know, and perhaps the strike indicator's disappeared, or a dry fly that's above the nymph, and you strike very quickly and rap- savagely.

On the other hand, you know, a trout that, that comes up and is sipping dry flies, you, the old expression is you say, "God save the queen," before you somewhat gently lift the rod and the fish is on. Well, if you lift the rod after a bonefish takes your fly, it's game over.

**D. Roger Maves:** Is that primarily due to the, the toughness, more toughness of the saltwater fish, their mouths and so forth, to try to get that hook set in there?

**Frank Foster:** Well, no, it's just physics really. Uh, bonefish are bottom feeders. They spend their whole lives [00:14:00] with their nose digging in dirt, essentially, the bottom. And when you, uh, feel something and lift the rod or trout set, it just pulls the fly right out of his mouth.

**D. Roger Maves:** Mm-hmm. Frank, I just had a question come in here on the internet.

Treg in Owens in Moscow, Idaho, he's asking what color of lens do you prefer for your Polaroids glasses?

**Frank Foster:** Oh, that's a wonderful question. I've used amber for a long time, and recently, uh, Costa Del Mar came out with a, uh, a mirrored lens. It's not one of those where you can, you know, look in somebody else wearing them and shave your face or comb your hair. It's not like that, but it's a kind of a new technology they have, and I've been wearing those on bright days. On, uh, days where the, unfortunately, the sky is not kind to bonefish anglers, where you're socked in all [00:15:00] day, uh, wear yellow lenses, just like I do always when I trout fish.

The yellow lens, even on a very cloudy day, gives you a, a raised image as you look through the water that you won't get with a darker shade of lens.

**D. Roger Maves:** Are these new lenses, these mirrored ones, um, are those amber or yellow as well, or...?

**Frank Foster:** Yeah, they're sort of amber, but I mean, they call them the mirrored lens, and I apologize for not being able to be more descriptive of the shade they are, the color, uh, that they are, but they're more amber than they are, certainly more amber than they are, as I said, you couldn't, a woman couldn't look in them, somebody's wearing them, put her lipstick on, let's put it that way.

**D. Roger Maves:** Right. Right. Yeah. You know, after four decades of chasing, I think it's been four decades you have chased bonefish. Is that correct?

**Frank Foster:** That's right.

**D. Roger Maves:** Yeah. What have you [00:16:00] learned about the fish that surprised you most?

**Frank Foster:** Well, one thing is the, uh, is most... Well, you say surprised, let me just modify that to say that's most interesting to me.

**D. Roger Maves:** Sure.

**Frank Foster:** A couple of things, and one I've already described it, and that's the color change they can adopt depending on which direction they're facing or heading, and also the bottom. They tend to, just like redfish do and snook, take on the color of their habitat. You know, if you catch a bonefish or a redfish or a snook way out in the backcountry, they'll be darker in color.

Fish that are very close to the ocean are- tend to be much lighter, whiter, more silver in color. But the other thing that's, to me, that's fascinating about a bonefish, bonefish have, and a lot of people don't know this, they have windshields [00:17:00] I'm calling it a windshield. They have a windshield on each eye. I can't tell you what the tissue is that it's made from, but if you gently hold a bonefish prior to releasing it, and reach down with your finger, with the fish still in the water now for conservation practices, and touch his eye, you will not be able to find an eyeball, 'cause they have a windshield on each eyeball.

It's completely covered. There's no way you could poke the eyeball out of a bonefish. You'd have to get him in the boat if you wanted to pull his eyeball. You'd have to carve it out of his, uh, face. And-

**D. Roger Maves:** Is that something that comes down like an eyelid, or is it all the way over there?

**Frank Foster:** No, it's not a lid. They don't have eyelids. It's like a windshield. It's a clear-

**D. Roger Maves:** Oh ...

**Frank Foster:** uh, cover-

**D. Roger Maves:** Clear covering, [00:18:00] huh? Yeah. Interesting ...

**Frank Foster:** that goes over their eye, just like a windshield. It's the best term I can come up with, and it's something that God equipped these fish, bonefish with, because of the way they feed. They spend-

**D. Roger Maves:** Yeah

**Frank Foster:** Most of their lives with their head stuck in the dirt, in the bottom, the sandy bottom of a flat.

**D. Roger Maves:** Right.

**Frank Foster:** And so without this, I mean, think about if you did that, the term, "I have something in my eye", would be the understatement of the century.

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

**Frank Foster:** You know, it'd be a bunch of sand, but they don't have that problem.

**D. Roger Maves:** Yeah.

**Frank Foster:** Because the shield, they can continue to grub on the sandy bottom and still see their prey without, quote, getting something in their eye.

**D. Roger Maves:** Right. Right. Reminds-

**Frank Foster:** In fact, I find that just really a fascinating quirk of nature.

**D. Roger Maves:** Yeah. Yeah. It reminds me, uh, when I was a kid, we [00:19:00] drove from Chicago, my family drove from Chicago to Anchorage, Alaska, 'cause my dad was getting stationed there.

We drove up the Alcan Highway and my dad had, I think it was a 1960 Mercury sedan, and he put on these bubbles on the headlights, these plastic coverings to protect the headlights because, you know, the Alcan Highway was all gravel back then, and sure enough, you know, you'd lose a headlight or two on the way up there. But that reminds me of those bubbles. I guess-

**Frank Foster:** Yeah ...

**D. Roger Maves:** Uh, yeah, yeah, covering the protective-

**Frank Foster:** See that, see where I would, yeah.

**D. Roger Maves:** Yeah, yeah. Let's take a quick break here, and then we'll come right back and we'll dig deeper into talking about bonefish. So, um, hang tight everybody, we'll be right back.

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You're listening to Ask About Fly Fishing Internet Radio, and we're talking with Frank Foster about Bonefish Dreams. If you'd like to ask Frank a question, just go to our homepage, [askaboutflyfishing.com](http://askaboutflyfishing.com), and use that Q&A text box to send us your question.

So Frank, at this point in the show, I always ask, you know, what's going on in your fly fishing world. Tell us about what you're up to. I know publishing your book is a, is a big event and a lot of end of a, a lot of hard work. So tell us what you're up to now.

**Frank Foster:** Well, I have one more signing left, actually two. [00:21:00]

On July 10th, Friday at 5:30 PM, I'll be speaking and signing books at Brookings Outfitters in Cashiers, North Carolina. Cashiers is the way it's pronounced. Phonetically, it's spelled Cashiers. Brookings is a massive outfitter store and wonderful fly shop. And so if anybody's in the area, July 10th, Friday, 5:30 PM, Brookings has their famous Blue Line Bar.

**D. Roger Maves:** Hmm.

**Frank Foster:** Yeah, I assume you know where the blue line came from.

**D. Roger Maves:** Right.

**Frank Foster:** You know, when you look at trout streams- Um ... you know the blue line, right?

**D. Roger Maves:** Right, the maps.

**Frank Foster:** The maps.

**D. Roger Maves:** Yeah.

**Frank Foster:** Yeah, so, and Brookings is kindly offering a, the first beverage from their bar, the Blue Line Bar, with their compliments. So if anybody's in the area, would love to see them [00:22:00] for that.

**D. Roger Maves:** Great.

**Frank Foster:** I have another thing up in Linville, North Carolina that I was invited to, to speak to a book club, so that's a private affair for members of the book club and their guests. But you asked what I, I'm up to in this particular area, and that's a couple of things.

**D. Roger Maves:** Frank, do you have a website for your book or-

**Frank Foster:** I do, and it-

**D. Roger Maves:** Yeah

**Frank Foster:** [www.frankfosterbonefishdreams.com](http://www.frankfosterbonefishdreams.com).

**D. Roger Maves:** Okay.

**Frank Foster:** Frankfosterbonefishdreams.com.

**D. Roger Maves:** People can connect with you there and-

**Frank Foster:** Yeah, I'd love to hear from anybody.

**D. Roger Maves:** Sure, sure. Great, great. Yeah, and we do have a link to your book on the front page of our website there, so if anybody's interested in, in ordering a book, you can do that there, or I'm sure work directly with Frank.

If you want an autographed copy, then that's the way to go. Well, great, great. Any bonefish trips planned in the near future?

**Frank Foster:** I've always got a bonefish [00:23:00] trip planned. And I shouldn't use the singular. It's, uh-

**D. Roger Maves:** Trips, huh? ...

**Frank Foster:** Always trips plans.

**D. Roger Maves:** Where are you headed to?

**Frank Foster:** Well, the next two that are on the books are to Little Abaco and Grand Bahama.

**D. Roger Maves:** Ah, okay. That's good bonefish country, right? Yeah.

**Frank Foster:** Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah.

**D. Roger Maves:** Some of the best, right. Yeah. Well, let's dive back into our questions, talk more about bonefish. What are environmental factors that influence where bonefish will be found on a given day, and how do you read those factors and convert them into success?

**Frank Foster:** Well, I would say three things, tide, tide, and tide. It's all about the tides.

**D. Roger Maves:** All about the tides.

**Frank Foster:** Yeah.

**D. Roger Maves:** Incoming tides, right?

**Frank Foster:** Well, because bonefish come onto a flat based on [00:24:00] what the water's doing, whether it's rising or falling, and in what stage of a tide it's in. And there's some secondary issues, like the water clarity and so forth, but the main thing is the tide

**D. Roger Maves:** And I'm sure that fluctuates around the world as how big that tide is and, you know, how much water is on the flat, or is that something that's fairly consistent?

**Frank Foster:** Well, no, it's, uh... There are two things that are always moving. One is bonefish, 'cause they're always on the move. They never, they never just sit there, for example, like a trout will in their feeding station, while an angler can be stationary with them and, uh, present, you know, up to a dozen different flies to them trying to get them to eat one.

Bonefish are always moving, looking, well, mainly moving, looking for food, [00:25:00] but also moving if they're just in transit from point A to point B for whatever reason. And so depending on whether the... On low tide, for example, a lot of people think bonefish are a little more nervous because they wanna feed as long as they can, but make sure they get off the flat before the water gets too skinny, and they may be more exposed to predators.

When the water falls, the bonefish tend to, at the end of the tide phase on low water, drop off the flat into deeper water, regroup, and wait for the tide to turn, and when it floods back on that flat, they go with it, and are actually a little more comfortable on a rising tide 'cause they know they're all...

There's plenty of time to have plenty of water available to them. Any of that make any sense?[00:26:00]

**D. Roger Maves:** Yeah. Yeah. Do they know where the bonefish go when they get off the flat? Are they hanging just off the reef?

**Frank Foster:** Yeah, just into deeper water. They're, you know, pools. The channels, little finger channels or big channels, they just drop off the flat and wait'll for the water to come back where they can feed on the little critters that live on those skinny water flats.

**D. Roger Maves:** Right. Yeah. Phil McCartney in Kentucky wrote in and he says, "How do you feel about fly fishing for carp?" It's, he's referring to them as freshwater bonefish more than a marketing plan of the carp's publicist came up with.

But a lot of people refer to them as freshwater bonefish or, and 'cause you may fish for them similarly. Have you fished for carp? Is it similar?

**Frank Foster:** All I can say is I'm aware of what you're talking about, but I've never done it.

**D. Roger Maves:** Oh, okay.

**Frank Foster:** I [00:27:00] think there's two kinds of carp, if I'm not mistaken. I've never fooled with either one of them, to be perfectly frank.

**D. Roger Maves:** Mm-hmm. Yeah. I know out here in the west, up in Wyoming, they, some guides even have flats boats, and they go out on the lakes and, uh, hunting for carp in similar fashion of bonefish.

Anyway, yeah. Anyway, that's something out there. Here's another environmental weather question. I guess it's Winter in New York. Says, "When fishing for bonefish, tarpon, permit, and you can't get a full or new moon week at the lodge, does it matter that much in your opinion? Is the fishing that poor? Do you find another lodge to get a prime week or skip a year?"

How important is that to- You're saying

**Frank Foster:** What do you do if you can't get a booking on a full or a new moon?

**D. Roger Maves:** Right.

**Frank Foster:** Okay. Well, I never book on the full or the new moon anyway.

**D. Roger Maves:** That's when you don't wanna book. Yep.

**Frank Foster:** That's my [00:28:00] opinion.

**D. Roger Maves:** Yeah.

**Frank Foster:** And-

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

**Frank Foster:** full or the new moon or the tides around those big moons are called spring tides because the high tides are substantially higher and the lows are substantially lower.

And the problem with that are those high tides, because the bonefish get way back up in the mangroves. You can't get at 'em, and you ha- all you're reduced to is sitting there and waiting for the water to fall so they'll come out.

On the opposite of a spring tide, in other words, tides around quarter moons, are called neap tides, N-E-A-P, and I prefer those because it's much easier to get more hours of low water during a bonefishing day, and low water is, generally speaking, what you want for bonefish because [00:29:00] they can't go way up in the mangroves and hide from you.

**D. Roger Maves:** Okay. Yeah, that's what I, I always understood, uh, and for fishing for tarpon and also permit, that a full moon is not ideal. That was my understanding as well.

Talk about reading water and finding fish. What types of flats are most productive for bonefish, and how can anglers recognize them?

**Frank Foster:** Well, all flats are so similar, but if you can fish flats that are near a creek or moving water, uh, you're better off, particularly near creeks because particularly on falling water, the outgoing tide brings food out of, for bonefish, out of the creek and onto the flat.

**D. Roger Maves:** Mm-hmm. So those are more ideal? What about, I mean, what about the bottom structure? You know, [00:30:00] gravel, mud, you know, is there anything you're looking for there?

**Frank Foster:** Those critters that they're after are on all kinds of bottoms.

**D. Roger Maves:** Okay.

**Frank Foster:** And, uh, of course, from an angler standpoint, s- a smooth, pure white sand bottom is a dream, 'cause you can see the fish from long distances, and if you're wading, you don't have to worry about stepping in a hole or tripping over a rock on the bottom.

**D. Roger Maves:** Right. Okay. What about distinguishing... I mean, we always wanna fish the fish that are eating, right? So how do you distinguish the feeding fish from a cruising fish? And do you, uh, tend to, you know, are you still casting to cruising fish, or you just ignore them and look for feeding fish? How does that all work?

**Frank Foster:** Well, a term that is probably more associated with tarpon fishing is the word happy. [00:31:00] What you wanna look for is happy fish, and that means just what you asked, a feeding fish. The faster a fish is going, the less happy, the less chance he's feeding and looking for something that's gonna look like your fly.

Now, that doesn't mean you don't cast to it. You know, if you... I mean, you don't go out of your way to cast to it, or them, if it's a school. But ideally, fish that are... Well, the ultimate is one that is not moving and is tailing, you know, grubbing on the bottom in one spot. Uh, he's found a nice little bucket of stew or whatever, so to speak, and he stays in one place, and you see his tail wagging in the air.

And then from there, just slowly cruising, meandering fish are the ones that are happy and looking for something to eat on the bottom. And then it goes [00:32:00] down from there to the ones that are sort of zooming by. Your percentage goes way down there.

**D. Roger Maves:** Right. Right

**Frank Foster:** In November, you see a lot of migrating fish that are actually going from point A to point B.

This is mostly in November. And a lot of people, and they will eat. You know, they're usually in schools. You put the fly way out in front of them, and some people like that. I, I don't personally see, consider that a particularly satisfying angling experience. Some people who don't do it very often or are less experienced will go down there just for that, because they know they'll get a lot of hookups. They're in for-

**D. Roger Maves:** Hmm ...

**Frank Foster:** They're out for quantity rather than quality.

**D. Roger Maves:** Interesting. No, I hadn't heard about that. And when you say November, are you talking about in the, uh-

**Frank Foster:** In the Bahamas ...

**D. Roger Maves:** Central America? Oh, in the Bahamas. Okay.

**Frank Foster:** [00:33:00] In, in the Bahamas, November is migrating fish month, typically.

**D. Roger Maves:** Okay. Do you consider the Bahamas one of the best places in the, in the Caribbean that, uh, for bonefish?

**Frank Foster:** I do, and the, particularly since the bonefish some years ago left the Florida Keys, and as everybody probably knows, they're making a big comeback there, which is wonderful, but in that period when they weren't in the Keys to speak of, uh, the Bahamas sort of took over, and it's my go-to location.

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

I know that they have the larger bonefish there than, like, in Belize and so forth. Is that ... Do you know, do you know what causes that? Uh-

**Frank Foster:** You say larger fish in Belize? Is that what you said?

**D. Roger Maves:** No, no. In the Bahamas than in Belize.

**Frank Foster:** Oh, yeah.

**D. Roger Maves:** Do you know [00:34:00] what causes that, why they don't grow bigger in Belize? Is it food source? Is it different species or variant?

**Frank Foster:** I have no idea.

**D. Roger Maves:** Okay.

**Frank Foster:** I just, I just got back from Belize, and I can confirm for you that the bonefish are small.

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

**Frank Foster:** And we were, uh, mainly after permit and tarpon, but-

**D. Roger Maves:** Hmm. Where were you in Belize?

**Frank Foster:** But they're still there, and they're still small.

**D. Roger Maves:** What part of Belize were you in fishing?

**Frank Foster:** I went to, uh, a wonderful lodge called Turneffe Flats.

**D. Roger Maves:** Yeah, okay. Good. Yeah, in the northern part, right?

**Frank Foster:** Yeah.

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

**Frank Foster:** Very nice people run that place.

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

**Frank Foster:** And own, uh, and own it.

**D. Roger Maves:** Yeah, yep. Yeah, beautiful location.

When you're hunting bonefish, how close can you realistically get before spooking them?

Are they spooky fish in [00:35:00] general?

**Frank Foster:** The degree of spookiness of bonefish, whether it's a single or schools or singles and doubles or schools, is extremely variable, and I don't know of anybody who knows why some are and some aren't. The conditions have a big part to play. When it's windy, there's a chop on the water, it's much easier to get closer to a bonefish because their ability to see and hear you is diminished.

But when it's slick calm and bright and sunny, very difficult to get very close to them because they can hear you and they can see you so easily, and the slightest little movement or noise that gets transmitted through the water will put them off. [00:36:00] But in any given conditions, there's great variation in the degree of spookiness in any day of fishing.

Some days they'll just be seemingly oblivious to everything but your fly and pounce on it. Other days, the slightest little disturbance that you might make or the just, a very light beadhead fly landing terrifies them. They run from it like they saw a ghost. And it's unpredictable, totally I've had fish follow the fly that I'm stripping and eat it a rod's length from the boat, and I've had other fish that I've had to cast 80 feet to, and they're terrified.

**D. Roger Maves:** Interesting. Yeah. So, um, sounds like if [00:37:00] you're going for bonefish, you better be ready to make your casts, 'cause you could be making long casts, right? I mean, that's, that's probably a big-

**Frank Foster:** Yeah, and you better be ready to be quiet too.

**D. Roger Maves:** Better... I'm sorry?

**Frank Foster:** And you'd better be ready to be quiet.

**D. Roger Maves:** Yeah. Yeah. Well, that's kinda the next question is what, what have guides taught you about being stealthy, things to do, not to do?

**Frank Foster:** Well, if you're on the, uh... I see anglers that insist on wearing shoes when they're on the casting platform, and shoes, I don't care what kind they are, even sneakers, I guess the term is supposed to mean they're quiet, they're not. They make noise. And, you know, a cooler, lid to a cooler, uh, dropping something, anything on the and the deck of the skiff transmits that noise.

Now, the chief scientist at Bonefish [00:38:00] Tarpon Trust, Aaron Adams, brilliant man, very nice guy too, tells me, told me in an interview for my book, that they cannot hear you talk. But I swear I have had bonefish, I can remember one instance in particular, when I presented a fly to a single large bonefish, and the guide said, "Strip," and that fish just bolted off.

**D. Roger Maves:** Hmm.

**Frank Foster:** So the last thing I'd ever do is disagree with the, the eminent scientist, but all I know is, is that when you're on the casting platform on the bow of a skiff, or when you're wading, and wading in particular, you have to just creep up on those fish very gently. And even then, they somehow know you're there. They sense your presence. So stealth and [00:39:00] being quiet is paramount.

**D. Roger Maves:** Right. Right. Well, time to take another quick break here, Frank. Hang tight, we'll be right back.

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You're listening to Ask About Fly Fishing Internet Radio. We're talking with Frank Foster about Bonefish Dreams. If you'd like to ask Frank a question, just go to our homepage and fill out that form. Send it our way, and we'll get your questions answered.

Okay, let's see. Okay, there is a question came in here on the internet, Frank. Phil in Kentucky says, "I've read stories about reels exploding from friction when a hooked bonefish takes off running. Have you had any equipment fail when a hooked bonefish decides to leave the area?"

**Frank Foster:** I have not. Years ago when I first got into fly fishing, I had a couple of reels, uh, smoked by a tarpon and had to throw them away and start over. [00:41:00] But the reels, if you go to any reputable fly shop and say, "I want a reel for bonefishing," you're not gonna have to worry about what your listener asked.

They're all now of incredible quality, and I've had a bonefish reel get cooked, and frankly, I've never heard about anybody that did. The only way I can think of that would happen would be if somebody made the mistake of taking a trout reel out on the bonefish flat.

**D. Roger Maves:** Yeah, most of those saltwater reels are very well made nowadays.

**Frank Foster:** Yeah, and, and you know, and so many people forget to, or get real lax about, uh, even hosing them off. They're maintenance-free.

**D. Roger Maves:** Yeah.

**Frank Foster:** And they just keep on working. They're-

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

**Frank Foster:** They're astonishing really.

**D. Roger Maves:** [00:42:00] Yeah, you wanna ma- one thing I learned is you wanna make sure you go to the, the flats with a, a large arbor reel too, uh, so you can fight that.

**Frank Foster:** I was gonna say that, that, uh, you know, the first reels I had were the Billy Pate reels by, uh, what's-his-name built, uh, Ted Jurasek, and they were anything but large arbor. But all my reels, I still have a few of those, but all my reels now are large arbor, and they seem to be getting, the arbor seem to be getting larger if anything, so. Which, you know-

**D. Roger Maves:** Sure helps taking up that line, yeah ... well,

**Frank Foster:** It's a wonderful advantage when you're, uh, you know, cranking on a nice big bonefish.

**D. Roger Maves:** Right. Right. Yeah, or a tarpon or a permit.

**Frank Foster:** Exactly. Exactly.

**D. Roger Maves:** Yeah, yeah. Well, and since we've, we've kind of, kind of migrated over to equipment, what's your standard rod, reel, fly line setup for bonefish?

Is it something that [00:43:00] you settled on, or do you have different rigs and wading boots or?

**Frank Foster:** Well, I, I, I guess, you know, if, if somebody said to me, "Well, uh, I'm gonna get into this bonefishing, but I don't wanna buy a closet full of rods. I just, I'm gonna buy one." So I would say

a nine-foot, eight weight with a large arbor reel and weight forward bonefish taper fly line, and you'll be in business.

**D. Roger Maves:** Yeah, or just about anywhere in the world, right?

**Frank Foster:** Yes.

**D. Roger Maves:** Yeah. Yeah. And what about leader? What do you use for leader, and how long are your leaders?

**Frank Foster:** Well, currently I'm using 12-foot leaders that are 16 pound test at the tippet, but 50 pound test at the butt section, and tapered from [00:44:00] there, from the 50 pound down to the 16 pound.

And I tie on 16 pound tippet after a, a certain number of fly changes.

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

**Frank Foster:** I start with a 12-foot leader, but it doesn't take very long for, for it to get a lot shorter than that.

**D. Roger Maves:** Yeah.

**Frank Foster:** I mean, with fly changes, it's not realistic to assume that y- one that starts with a 12-foot leader will be fishing all day with a 12-foot leader.

More likely it'll, you'll be fishing closer to 10 or 11 foot.

**D. Roger Maves:** Right.

**Frank Foster:** If it's windy, sometimes I will, before I start the day, snip off, uh, six, eight or 12 inches of the tippet to shorten the leader to start with.

**D. Roger Maves:** And why is that?

**Frank Foster:** If it's [00:45:00] windy.

**D. Roger Maves:** Oh, if it's windy.

**Frank Foster:** So that it, it-

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

**Frank Foster:** It'll make... The shorter the leader, the easier it is to get the leader to turn over.

**D. Roger Maves:** And punch through the wind, yeah, with the fly, right? Yeah. Yeah. Okay.

What about fly patterns? Are there any universal patterns that you've used all over the world that seem to work everywhere? Does each place have its own unique selection that you go to depending on the guides?

**Frank Foster:** Well, just about anywhere in the Bahamas, the standard issue bonefish flies, uh, will work fine.

There are some remote places where ... I'm trying to remember in the Seychelles what the guides suggested. But I can't remember, to be perfectly honest with you. But I will tell you that the ... I would say if you had to put one fly in your box, you were told that's all you could have, [00:46:00] probably the Gotcha is the universally accepted fly by bonefish worldwide.

**D. Roger Maves:** Mm-hmm.

**Frank Foster:** I use plenty of other flies, like the Manic Shrimp pattern, the, uh, Gotcha Clouser, uh, Enrico Puglisi's Spawning Shrimp. You know, pick up any catalog and, you know, there's endless patterns it seems.

**D. Roger Maves:** Right. Yeah. Yeah, primarily representing crabs and shrimp for the most part, right?

**Frank Foster:** Right.

**D. Roger Maves:** Yeah.

**Frank Foster:** Although I have a now dearly departed friend I used to fish with, former board member of Bonefish Tarpon Trust, and he would tie on nothing but a crab pattern.

Fish with it all day, catch bonefish.

**D. Roger Maves:** Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

**Frank Foster:** So there you go. And I, I know guides and people will tell you it doesn't make a [00:47:00] bit of difference what fly you tie on. They're, they're, they're probably gonna eat it.

**D. Roger Maves:** If it's presented properly. Yeah.

**Frank Foster:** Exactly. Exactly.

**D. Roger Maves:** Yeah, we were, um, we were out on a pancake flat in Belize and kinda taking a break, and I just started turning over rocks out there, coral, to look underneath and find crabs, and it seemed like none of those crabs were the same color. Like, every one had a unique color.

**Frank Foster:** Yeah.

**D. Roger Maves:** Some were brown, some were greenish. Um, what that told me is if that's representative, I mean, I'm looking at all these things, that's what the fish are seeing too, and it's more about presentation than it, it would seem than the color of the crab, which some people are get really picky about. But and it seemed like-

**Frank Foster:** You were ... I think you were on a trout stream checking out the entomology-

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

**Frank Foster:** Even though you were on the flats. That, that's neat. I wouldn't have thought of that.

**D. Roger Maves:** [00:48:00] Yeah. But they were all different colors. I was surprised. I thought, "Oh, well, they'll all be brown, or they'll all be green, or they'll all be, you know, in between." Uh, but no, they were all different.

So that, it just made me think about I think sometimes we put too much emphasis on the flies and not so, and we should be looking more at our presentation than anything else. I know there's a lot of trout anglers that would say the same thing about trout. It's like it's not so much the fly, it's, is the presentation because these fish are always eating something.

They have to. It's, uh, it's breakfast, lunch, and dinner all the time, right? Pretty much.

**Frank Foster:** Yeah. Right.

**D. Roger Maves:** They have to live.

**Frank Foster:** In fact, in my book, uh, I quote my friend Chico Fernandez, is that he wrote in his book, he sometimes will change the size of the fly and not the color-

**D. Roger Maves:** Mm-hmm ...

**Frank Foster:** To entice the take.

**D. Roger Maves:** How much of [00:49:00] that do you think is more for the angler than for the fish?

**Frank Foster:** Ah, good question.

**D. Roger Maves:** Yeah, yeah. Sometimes it's, you know, we always talk about confidence, right? You gotta be confident in your fly.

**Frank Foster:** Right.

**D. Roger Maves:** And so, you know, that... since it all plays a role, I guess. One way or the other, it all works itself together.

Jason Stacy in Kentucky wrote in and said, "What flies and what size would you recommend to somebody if they plan to do a do it yourself bone trip, bonefish trip?"

Would they be the ones you just mentioned, the gotcha, the pugisi, spawning shrimp, things like that?

**Frank Foster:** Yes, and probably a number four hook and bead eye, and because ideally what you're looking for is fish in low water So if you're successful in anticipating which tide you'll be fishing to try to [00:50:00] have low water to fish most of the day, you know, you don't wanna be charging out there with a, a number two, uh, lead eye gotcha or something like that, which sounds like to a bonefish that you've landed a hardware store next to him.

**D. Roger Maves:** How do you decide when to fish a heavier fly versus a lighter fly?

**Frank Foster:** Just the depth of the water.

**D. Roger Maves:** Okay.

**Frank Foster:** And also the, uh, you know, the deeper the water, the heavier the fly, 'cause the, you know, bonefish are always on the move, so you have to make your cast to a spot that you want the fly to land to anticipate where the fish is gonna move to.

And problem with fishing too light a fly in deeper water is by the time it finally sinks, the bonefish may have moved out of the range that you thought he was gonna be in. So it's [00:51:00] important to have a fly that sinks rapidly enough to get down to the bottom where the bonefish are looking for food, but not be so heavy as to risk spooking them 'cause of some big thing that landed in the water and made a big noise and terrified them.

**D. Roger Maves:** Mm-hmm. Yeah. Yeah. We had a follow-up question come in here from Steven Sykes in Silver Springs, Maryland. He says, "On leaders, I assume you're using fluorocarbon leaders since the fish are on the bottom when feeding. Is that the case? And also do you-

**Frank Foster:** I have used a lot of... I, you know, I've... I'm actually using fluorocarbon now, but for years I used pre-tapered 12 foot, 12 pound test leaders from Cortland, and did very well with them.

It's said that fluorocarbon will sink a little faster, and that's good, but in my heart of hearts, I'm not sure there's a material [00:52:00] difference, only very subtle ones.

**D. Roger Maves:** Yeah. Hmm. He also asked if you ever use intermediate lines.

**Frank Foster:** Intermediate sink for tarpon, yes.

**D. Roger Maves:** Not for bonefish?

**Frank Foster:** No.

**D. Roger Maves:** Okay. There are more leader questions coming here with Treg says, "Do you, do you use a Bimini twist anywhere in your leader? If not, what knot do you use to go from 50 pound to the next piece of leader?"

**Frank Foster:** Blood knots.

**D. Roger Maves:** Blood knots, yeah.

**Frank Foster:** Surgeon knot's fine. Bimini twist, I don't think I've ever seen a Bimini twist in a bonefish leader system. Plenty of them used in tarpon leader systems.

**D. Roger Maves:** Hmm. Uh, another question in on the internet. Treg asks, um, "At Christmas Island, the guides did not like the rubber legs on my flies. How do you feel about that?"

**Frank Foster:** Uh, rubber legs, often called silly legs, [00:53:00] uh-

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

**Frank Foster:** i'm, I'm a fan of them. I have encountered a very few guides who s- don't seem to like them. Had one guide grab my fly one time and took his pliers out and cut them off.

Uh- You know, which is, I mean, which... I didn't say anything. I was fine with it. He's the guide.

**D. Roger Maves:** Yeah.

**Frank Foster:** You know, he's... The old expression, don't guide the guide.

**D. Roger Maves:** Yeah.

**Frank Foster:** So, uh-

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

**Frank Foster:** And I think they ate it, so it goes back to what you hear often. Some of these things, it probably doesn't make much difference one way or the other.

**D. Roger Maves:** Hmm. What, uh-

**Frank Foster:** But I've been, I like silly legs, so.

**D. Roger Maves:** Do you? Yeah, I mean, it gives a lot of movement, you know? I mean-

**Frank Foster:** Yeah ...

**D. Roger Maves:** Yeah, I had some unique experiences with Pat's Rubber Leg flies down in Patagonia fishing for trout, but stripping, stripping in the lake, you know. The guide says, "Yeah, strip it. See what [00:54:00] happens."

**Frank Foster:** Yeah.

**D. Roger Maves:** Sure enough, he says it, they don't know what it is, but it looks like it's alive and moving. They're not gonna hit it, so.

**Frank Foster:** Yeah. Yeah.

**D. Roger Maves:** Sure enough, yeah You know, a lot, lot talks about that in the, um... You know, Puglisi uses a lot of this kinda translucent materials and stuff on his flies, and I think that gives it more lifelike look and action, and I think there's a lot to that in the way it flies, whether it's bonefish or trout or permit or whatever.

But yeah, what separates consistently successful bonefish anglers from those who struggle? What do they do different or the same all the time?

**Frank Foster:** Well, just, you know, the two basic things, casting and stripping. I mean, you have to be able to present the fly in a way that removes all suspicion on the part of the bonefish and keeps him at ease, and then you have to strip it in a way that, [00:55:00] uh, does the same thing, where it looks natural to him.

I see anglers where they're stripping, but they don't put much thought into their stripping technique. You have to imagine what that little thing looks like, little critter that a bonefish is chasing looks like on the bottom, and the reason you strip is to make it hop along the bottom like they do. And, and some guys, they cast and lay the fly down, they drop it, and immediately start furiously stripping and end up scaring the, the you know what out of the bonefish, and they bolt off.

**D. Roger Maves:** So let me present a scenario to you. You're on the bow of the boat. The guide says, "Fish at, uh, 2:00 moving left, feeding as they go." What do you do?

**Frank Foster:** Well, the ideal first [00:56:00] thing to happen is for the angler to see the fish. That's always ideal, but it doesn't always happen. And then you get into directional casting.

That's a term that means the guide directs your casting verbally. If you can't, if it's apparent you can't see the fish, then he takes over and says, "Give me a cast at..." Okay, like, if that fish is at 2:00 moving toward noon, he'll probably say, "Give me a cast at noon, 50 feet." And so you start making false casts, and the guide will typically say, "More left, more left," or, "More right, more right.

A little more distance." And when he's satisfied or hopes that the airborne fly is in the right place, the best place, he'll say, "Okay, drop it." And then you, that becomes your [00:57:00] final cast after the false cast, and you hope for the best. Is that the answer you were looking for?

**D. Roger Maves:** Yeah. Now what happens? The, the fly hits the water, and what do you do next?

**Frank Foster:** Oh, well, assuming that the angler still can't see the fish, then the guide then takes over and directs the stripping operation. He may say, depending on where the fly has landed, let's say it's landed a little further from the fish than the angler or the guide, if he were fishing, would've put it if the angler saw the fish, and the bonefish hadn't had a chance to get there yet, he might say, "Okay, let it sit a minute."

And then when the f- fish comes in range of the fly, then he'll say, "Strip. Strip." And a lot of times he'll say, "Strip, strip, strip. Stop." And the reason he says that is [00:58:00] when a bonefish is chasing these little critters that are hopping along the bottom trying to get away from the bonefish, a lot of times they'll, they will stop and try to burrow down in the sand and hide.

It rarely works for them, but that's why he says stop, to try to imitate what those little critters do. And so typically he might say, "Strip, strip, strip. Stop." And then for beginning anglers, he'll say, "Long strip," and that's a metaphor for strike the fish with a strip strike. And he uses that with inexperienced anglers because if you tell a trout angler who's new to bonefishing, "Okay, he's got it," you know, next thing that rod comes up in the air, and the trout- lose the fish.

**D. Roger Maves:** Yeah. Yeah. Okay, good. No, that's a good description of how it all happens. [00:59:00] And when we're talking about stripping, are these six-inch strips, 12-inch strips?

**Frank Foster:** The rather personal thing I find, there are a lot of guides that say long and slow. Give me long, slow strips. I mostly try to fish for bigger fish-

**D. Roger Maves:** Mm-hmm

**Frank Foster:** And I find that long strips have the possibility of spooking a large fish. I have found that if you present a fly to a large fish, less is more as far as stripping is concerned, that you just barely sort of move it and you have a better chance of not spooking them and of getting a take.

**D. Roger Maves:** Hmm. Okay. Good tip. Good tip. The, um ... You know, let's say you're a newbie to this and you get out there, and you're lucky enough to get that first take, do your [01:00:00] strip set, get hooked up. What are beginning bonefish anglers expect during their first bonefish run, and how do you handle that run?

**Frank Foster:** Well, the first thing that beginning bonefish anglers need to deal with is line management, and the less experienced the bonefish angler is, the more issues and catastrophes they have with losing fish because they didn't clear the line properly, the line got wind clearing, got wrapped around the butt of the rod and broke the fish off, and so forth.

Or, I mean, the first time I went bonefishing with a fly rod as opposed to catching them on spinning gear, I broke off the first two or three fish I hooked because I was new to [01:01:00] fly fishing. I didn't understand yet fully the extent to which your left hand becomes the reel, so to speak, and you have to let the line go.

**D. Roger Maves:** Mm-hmm.

**Frank Foster:** So, uh, those are things I think beginning fly fishing anglers have to deal with.

**D. Roger Maves:** Yeah. You know, you had talked earlier about not wearing shoes.

**Frank Foster:** Yeah.

**D. Roger Maves:** So the other thing about that that I've found is that if you're not wearing shoes, you can feel that line under your foot if it's under your foot, where if you're wearing shoes, a lot of times you don't know if you're standing on your line or not. So-

**Frank Foster:** Very good. You put your finger on the other main reason that fishing barefoot is advised.

**D. Roger Maves:** Yeah. Yeah. Very ... I mean, I don't know, I found that invaluable to be able to feel what's going on down there.

**Frank Foster:** No question.

**D. Roger Maves:** Um, yeah, yeah. Phil in Kentucky wrote in here on the internet, he says, "Please tell us about the first bonefish you ever caught," since you just mentioned it.

Do you remember that catch?[01:02:00]

**Frank Foster:** Well, I do, and in fact, it's in the book, Bonefish Dream-

**D. Roger Maves:** Oh ...

**Frank Foster:** Is the story, my first one. And it was at Chub Key, and we were down there, I was down there with a friend of mine on his sport fish, and we were marlin fishing. And I'd always read in Florida Sportsman about this bonefish thing, but I'd never seen a bonefish, never caught one, didn't know anything about them, how to fish for.

So we asked around if there was a bonefish guide, and sure enough, there was. And way back then, his skiff was nothing to, nothing you'd wanna see in a boat show or anything, but kinda very basic. Had no poling platform, that was before they came along, and his push pole was a piece of red pine he'd chiseled out, and he had some spinning rods that were, [01:03:00] shall we say, not exactly factory fresh, and off we went.

And wasn't that easy to get shrimp those days in The Bahamas, so, uh, he had some conch that he'd mutilated with his teeth, and put that on the hook, and that was the bait. And that was my first bonefish. It was about a seven-pounder.

**D. Roger Maves:** Wow. That's a good start.

**Frank Foster:** And it wasn't a fly rod, but-

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

**Frank Foster:** But, you know, even a spinning rod gets in a big curve and-

**D. Roger Maves:** Yeah.

**Frank Foster:** And that reel sings, and right then and there I was addicted.

**D. Roger Maves:** Yeah. Yeah. Cool. Cool. What are some other keys to fighting large bonefish without losing them, and what mistakes do most anglers make when fighting bonefish?

**Frank Foster:** Well, there are two [01:04:00] schools of thought on drag setting. I, I personally think it's that, that a slightly looser drag increases your odds.

Another thing is, you know, the, uh, trout fishing, you raise that rod, get that tip way up, we have to get the tip up, and the other thing is so much of the bottom of these bonefish flats are rocky, and so you'll see pictures of anglers, and I don't know how much you've done it yourself, but holding their rod way up above their head, almost like a referee signaling a touchdown, except his hands are together holding the rod.

And the reason for that is to try to get the greatest, sharpest angle between the running fish with a fly in his mouth and the hazards on the bottom. In other words, if you sort of [01:05:00] fought it sidearm, you'd have a much greater risk of the bonefish... What happens, they don't break you off, they just use these rocks or the rocky bottom or, or a piece of coral or anything, you know, on the bottom to rub the fly out of their mouth.

It's ingenious, really. They're quite accomplished at it, uh, much to my chagrin, more often than I'd like to admit.

**D. Roger Maves:** Hmm. Yeah. And I remember these little small mangroves that they seem to like to wrap around, uh-

**Frank Foster:** Oh, well, yeah. I mean, that's the other thing. They're maddening how they'll find a mangrove or even a stickup out away from the shore, you know?

**D. Roger Maves:** Right.

**Frank Foster:** They wrap the leader around. It just drives you crazy.

**D. Roger Maves:** Yeah. I re- I remember Pete Parker, who's passed away quite a few years ago, [01:06:00] this big saltwater guy from way back, and he'd always say, "Get down and dirty with them," any of these saltwater fish. Uh-

**Frank Foster:** Well, down and dirty is the phrase that Billy Pate invented with his world record tarpon fishing.

That's down and dirty, and I will go down and dirty on a bonefish, but only, and as you would any fish really, including tarpon, only in very close quarters.

**D. Roger Maves:** Mm-hmm.

**Frank Foster:** Because if you pull in the direction away from the path of the fish that he's trying to fight you and make another run, that tires them out very quickly 'cause this is only close quarters.

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

**Frank Foster:** You're just spinning your wheels, time to go down and dirty if the fish is still way out there.

**D. Roger Maves:** Mm-hmm. You've fished many of the world's premier bonefish destinations. What factors should anglers consider when choosing their first bonefish trip?

**Frank Foster:** [01:07:00] Well, a beginner, for their first trip, do some homework and pick a lodge or fishery that has lots of fish and ones that are always friendly.

**D. Roger Maves:** That's a big ask.

**Frank Foster:** I'll give you a prime example of that is the Morrows of Abaco, and there are lodges and that fish the Morrows. The Morrows are due west of Great Abaco, very large fishery, and the fish are always there. They're always friendly, and what some people maybe don't like about it as much, more experienced anglers, is they're always small.

Now, I shouldn't say that because I've caught six and seven pound fish in the Morrows, but by and [01:08:00] large, if you're wanna concentrate on pure quality instead of quantity, that would not be the choice. But a beginner who needs to develop, you know, his casting, his stripping technique, and how to fight and land a fish, someplace like that would be ideal in my opinion.

**D. Roger Maves:** Phil in Kentucky wrote in here and said, asked, "What are some places in Florida for a beginner to attempt to catch a bonefish?"

**Frank Foster:** I would say, well, really, I mean, the Keys, 'cause that's the only place they are w- and you could ... I mean, the Florida Keys and Biscayne Bay are the only Florida bonefisheries, so to speak.

They have now occasionally found a bonefish or two that must have taken a wrong turn at the channel marker or [01:09:00] something and ends up in Tampa Bay, and there's some, I think, as north as, far north as maybe Vero Beach or something, but just an oddity. But-

**D. Roger Maves:** Hmm ...

**Frank Foster:** from Biscayne Bay, which used to be a wonderful fishery and is coming back strong, and the same goes for the Keys, there are times of year that s- a beginner could go to, let's say, the middle Keys and w- kind of the end of the season when the, you f- like into June, July, when you find, uh, not big fish on the flats, 'cause the bigger fish, it's too hot for them, they drop off into deeper water, but the smaller fish are still up on the flats in good numbers and very easy to catch. So that would be another beginner location possibly.

**D. Roger Maves:** Okay. Okay. One final quest- or, well, two questions here. Richard in New Jersey wrote in and said, "Have you noticed marked changes in weather [01:10:00] patterns affecting flats fishing in the Caribbean, especially January, February, and March? Which months do you prefer?"

**Frank Foster:** Well, there was a fellow whose name escapes me who wrote a book many years ago about bonefishing when I first started to get involved with it, and he said the best months to go are May and November. And I still go in November, but I no longer go in May because in May, the meteorologists call it a Bermuda High, big high pressure so often is sitting out in the Atlantic and just funneling winds from the southeast.

And finally it dawned on me after a few years, and May is a good time to go tarpon fishing, so I stopped going in May. And then I finally also realized that down in the Bahamas, as opposed to Central Florida where I live, the water temperature and the air temperature in the winter [01:11:00] months, you know, like February, March and so forth, are quite amenable to anglers and particularly to bonefish because when the water's cooler on the flats is when the big fish come up on the flats.

And so I started going, now I go in November, occasionally early December, but rarely. Christmas is always an issue, and sometimes late January, but definitely February, March, and April are probably the three months, along with November, that I mostly go.

**D. Roger Maves:** Hmm. Okay. Okay, one final question.

You've experienced fishing in some of the world's most famous destinations. If an angler could take only one bonefish trip in their lifetime, where would you send them, and what would make that destination unforgettable?

**Frank Foster:** Well, I assume you mean an experienced angler, 'cause I think I've already answered the question as far as a novice. [01:12:00]

**D. Roger Maves:** Yeah. No. Yeah. I mean, um-

**Frank Foster:** Yeah, so experienced angler, uh I would say to go to a place you can't go to anymore.

That's, uh, Chub Cay in the Berry Islands. Now, you can go to it, only problem is they went private, and-

**D. Roger Maves:** Mm ...

**Frank Foster:** Uh, started out at \$50,000 initiation fee. It's gone to-

**D. Roger Maves:** Hmm ...

**Frank Foster:** 100,000. Started out at 5,000 a year dues, it's gone to 10, but it, it's beautiful facility there, and it is always, in my opinion, had the largest bonefish in the Bahamas, more so than Andros, which everybody else besides me, I think, agree has the largest fish.

To me, Chub Cay, which is in the Berry Islands, has the largest fish. You can still fish it if you have a... using a mother ship approach, [01:13:00] uh, and get the guides to come out, which they will do. But at Chub, I mean, a six-pound fish is just ho-hum.

**D. Roger Maves:** Hmm.

**Frank Foster:** Because so many of them, you know, are seven, eight, nine, and that's-

**D. Roger Maves:** Wow

**Frank Foster:** It's the only place I've caught double-digit fish, frankly.

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

**Frank Foster:** Andros, I've caught plenty of eight, nine-pounders, or just bumping up against double digits, but... So anyway, that would be my answer.

**D. Roger Maves:** Okay. Okay. Well, it's time to wrap things up here, Frank. We're running out of time. I told you it'd go by fast.

**Frank Foster:** Yeah.

**D. Roger Maves:** Yeah, lots to talk about, uh-

**Frank Foster:** It's been, been a lot of fun for me.

**D. Roger Maves:** Yeah, yeah. We're gonna stick with me here for just a couple more minutes. We're gonna give away memberships to Fly Fishers International, and one to Trout Unlimited, and we'll also be giving away your book, Bonefish Dreams: Stories, Facts, and Tips from Travels to the World's Best Destinations, courtesy of Stackpole Books. [01:14:00] So let's just take a minute and, Frank, tell us about your book, why you wrote it, what you feel you achieved with the book, and why people should read it.

**Frank Foster:** Well, I'll tell you. I'll read you the first paragraph of the book. Are you okay with that?

**D. Roger Maves:** Sure.

**Frank Foster:** Because it answers the question very well.

**D. Roger Maves:** Okay.

**Frank Foster:** Chapter one, The Bonefish and the Martini.

I'm a sick man. Want proof? Well, I get about 50 days a year of guided fly fishing, go to the Bahamas four or five times a year chasing bonefish, and I've fly fished in 17 different countries. Instead of

relying on an inheritance, my kids are gonna have to get jobs. Actually, they have wonderful careers and are a blessing in my life, but I think they're watching me pretty closely.

So anyway- ... as you can see from that, my life is sort of one big fishing trip.

**D. Roger Maves:** Yeah.

**Frank Foster:** And, and my buddies, you know, [01:15:00] I've had four novels published- And my buddies finally got on me and they said, "Why don't you write a book about this stuff? You know, get off your you-know-what and do it." So I did.

**D. Roger Maves:** And there it is, huh?

**Frank Foster:** Yeah.

**D. Roger Maves:** Very good. Really good. All right, well hang tight here and we'll be right back and we'll give that, one of those books away here tonight. Stick with me just a couple more minutes.

**Frank Foster:** All righty.

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

Thanks to the 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 fishery is healthy and sustainable now and for generations to come. Visit [btt.org](http://btt.org) and become a member of the Bonefish and Tarpon Trust [01:16:00] today. Again, that's [btt.org](http://btt.org).

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

Now it's time to give away our prizes. The winners for the drawings are randomly selected from our 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 the next show so you won't miss out on a chance to win one of these great prizes.

So if you are one of the lucky winners, we'll contact you after the show to collect your information so that we can deliver your prize to you. First thing we'll do is give away a one-year membership to Fly Fishers International, and that, uh... Let me see here. Let me check something. Looks like our winner is, I'm trying to see where he's, comes from, [01:17:00] Mark, Mark Billow.

Mark Billow, and he comes from Ohio. Mark Billow in Ohio, so congratulations Mark, and, uh, I know you'll enjoy your, your membership to Fly Fishers International. And if you aren't a member, you know, join today anyway. Great organization to support. Same with TU.

Our winner for TU is Daniel Ball in Maryland. Daniel Ball in Maryland, so congratulations Daniel, and also congratulations to Michael. I know you'll enjoy your memberships.

Now, time to give away a copy of Bonefish Dreams: Stories, Facts, and Tips from Travels to the World's Best Destinations, courtesy of Stackpole Books.

So they... You fill out the form on their homepage. You answer it there, put in your name, location, and, and see if you can win Frank's book here.

Uh, Frank mentioned what's called a universal fly used around the world for bonefish. What fly [01:18:00] is that?

**Frank Foster:** I would say the gotcha

**D. Roger Maves:** No, you're not supposed to answer. I know you know that.

**Frank Foster:** Oh, I thought you were talking to me. I'm so sorry.

**D. Roger Maves:** Yeah, uh, it's, uh ... Well, now somebody knows the answer, and it looks like it's, uh, Treg Owings in the ... I think he had it already, but that's, that's like ha- That's only happened three times in, like, 20 years to me, so I just get a kick out of it. I know my guests know this.

So Treg, you know the routine, buddy. Send it on over, and we'd get you a copy of this book, and I know you'll enjoy it.

So now, Frank, thanks so much for being on my show tonight. It was a pleasure and interesting to hear you talk about bonefish, which are, are also a love of mine. I just, I love the big three, bonefish, tarpon, and permit, and can't get enough of any of them, so, uh, it's always fun to talk about them.

**Frank Foster:** Well, I appreciate you having me. It was [01:19:00] a lot of fun.

**D. Roger Maves:** Well, good. Good. Good. Well, hopefully you've all found the podcast archive on our website. If you haven't, just look for the link at the top point of our menu. In that archive, you'll find all of our past shows, over 400 and some shows now. If you can search by keyword, like bonefish, Bahamas, and, uh, you'll find shows I know you'll enjoy.

Our next broadcast is July 1st, and that is going to be with Steve Ramirez, and I'm sorry, I just lost my screen here for a moment. Steve's got an upcoming book, and it's Travels to Patagonia. We're gonna talk about his journey working through a lot of the fisheries in Central America and South America, and a lot of highlights from his upcoming book that'll be released, I think it's in September.

So join us for that on July 1st, 7:00 PM Mountain, 9:00 PM Eastern Time, and we'll have [01:20:00] fun talking with Steve again. I've interviewed him many times and love his books. He's a great writer. So hope to see you on that show.

And we'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 show tonight.

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

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