

Mexico to Patagonia: An Angler's Journey Through a New World

With Steve Ramirez

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 Steve Ramirez, and he'll be answering your questions on Mexico to Patagonia: An Angler's Journey Through the New World.

This show will be 90 minutes in length, and we're broadcasting live over the internet. If you'd like to ask Steve a question, just go to our homepage at 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 this show. We'd sure appreciate it. 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 Steve Ramirez about Mexico to Patagonia: An Angler's Journey Through a New World.

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Before we introduce Steve, we'd like to let you know about the great prizes we have to give away tonight. For 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, 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 and fill out the form, and we'll announce the winners at the end of the show.

We'll also be giving away a copy of Steve's latest book, *A Season in Patagonia*, courtesy of Lyons Press. Now, here's how you can win. You must be the first person to answer the question I ask at the end of the show. The question will be about something we talk about during the show, so you must submit your answer along with your name and location using that text box on our homepage.

So listen closely, take notes, and type [00:03:00] fast, and maybe you'll be the proud winner of Steve's latest book, *A Season in Patagonia*.

Tonight our guest is Steve Ramirez. Steve is an award-winning outdoor and conservation author who lives and writes in the Texas Hill Country. Steve's first book, *Casting Forward: Fishing Tales from the Texas Hill Country*, was featured in the film *Mending the Line*, starring Brian Cox and Sinqua Walls.

His second and third books, *Casting Onward: Fishing Adventures in Search of America's Native Game Fish*, and *Casting Seaward: Fishing Adventures in Search of America's Saltwater Game Fish*, have received critical acclaim as important work of outdoor adventure and conservation literature. *A Season in Patagonia: An Angler and Naturalist's Journey to a New World* will be released in October of 2026.

It's a sequel. Uh, its sequel, *A Season of Fire and Ice: An Angler and Naturalist's Journey to Timeless Places and Hallowed Waters*, is in production and for scheduled release in 2028 and 2029. Steve [00:04:00] currently writes the *Seasonable Angler* column for *Fly Fisherman* magazine, and his work has appeared in various journals, including *Fly Fisherman*, *Trout* magazine, *The Fly Fish Journal*, *American Angler*, *Tail* magazine, *Hallowed Waters Journal*, *Under Wild Skies*, and many more.

Steve serves as the ambassador for Texas for the American Museum of Fly Fishing, is a life member of Trout Unlimited, and a contributing member of The Nature Conservancy, Audubon, and Rainforest Alliance. As a certified Master Naturalist, Steve is passionately involved in promoting the restoration and conservation of the watersheds, rivers, wetlands, and shorelands of North America and beyond.

He's an avid outdoor adventure traveler who has explored four continents, but who always seems to return home to the spring-fed Hill Country streams of Texas.

Steve, welcome back to Ask About Fly Fishing Internet Radio.

Steve Ramirez: Roger, thank you for having me back. It's such a pleasure to be with you and your listeners, and hearing you explain that bio [00:05:00] was tiring. I'm really a busy guy.

D. Roger Maves: Well, that's what happens when you accomplish a lot in your life, you know? Those bios get long, so, uh, yeah, all good. Yeah. I do have a limit on those, by the way, and it's, like, when I put together my scripts for the night and I fill out that section, if it goes on beyond that section, I start deleting parts. So-

Steve Ramirez: There you go ...

D. Roger Maves: That's how it works. You just fit in tonight.

Steve Ramirez: Perfect.

D. Roger Maves: Just fit in. I mean, just barely, but-

Steve Ramirez: Perfect ...

D. Roger Maves: yeah. So yeah, I said welcome back because we've had Steve here, uh, several times in the past. Back in September of 2022, we did a show Casting Forward, Onward, and Seaward. In June of 2023, we did one on Casting Seaward. And, uh, October of 2024, Casting Homeward. So anyway, Steve's back and willing to share his, the information and the stories and adventures [00:06:00] from his latest book, A Season in Patagonia. So, well, let's dive in here, Steve. Why don't you tell us about your book? Can you describe your book, A Season in Patagonia, for us, please?

Steve Ramirez: Sure. So anybody who's read any of my other four books, so that four book series, th- what we call the Casting series, they'll know that I don't just write fishing stories, so they're almost novels in a way. This one's kinda like that too, and this was actually the most difficult book I've written so far, my fifth one, for various reasons.

And what I did was I start this story, I'm in Portugal, and I'm sitting on the cliff face of a place that in Portuguese and Spanish and in Latin is called The End of the World. There's a lighthouse there. And that's where I start the story, and I follow the conquistadors' path.

From basically from the border of Mexico all the [00:07:00] way down to s- almost the southern tip of South America.

And where I was sitting, where I start the story is the place where they trained the sailors to go across to find and exploit the New World. So I thought it was a really fascinating way to explore the other Americas, you know, south of the Rio Grande or Rio Bravo, and that's what I did. So the only thing with this title is that it makes people think it's all of Patagonia, and it's not.

That's where it concludes, and that's where the story re- begins again. So I start out in Mexico, work my way through Central America, through the Peruvian cloud forest, across the Amazon, through the River Paraná, going off to Golden Dorado, and then from northern Patagonia all the way to southern Patagonia. It's quite a journey.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah, I'd say. I'd say. Can you give us a more in-depth explanation of the book's title and how it relates to the [00:08:00] envisioned global trilogy of outdoor nature and fly fishing literature?

Steve Ramirez: Sure. I select all these titles myself and design these things myself, and there's always a reason behind it.

So this title, "A Season in Patagonia," I'm not talking about a fishing season. I'm not talking about a season like summer, winter, fall. It's a season in a, in this case, a man's life, a season in a person's

life, a season of discovery, and that's what this whole book is about, discovery, and I use the metaphor of following the conquistadors, traveling and discovering also as my own journey.

Because to me, and I, I try to get this across in all my books, to me, it's just my way of approaching this. Fly fishing is a wonderful excuse to travel the world, to explore, to meet new people. It's not just about how many fish I catch.

It's the whole... you know, I'm definitely a traveler and not a tourist. [00:09:00] So what the story really gets to is a season in Patagonia, because in Patagonia we come to all the conclusions that this taught us along the way as we round our way through the Sea of Cortez and Yucatan and the jungles of Peru and jungles of the Amazon. And it's, it's really quite an adventure. And the other thing I'll say about it that the title doesn't really give you... Well, the, the subtitles mean a lot in all my books, so I always say angler and naturalist because I think I wanna see more of us feel that we're also naturalists, that we care about the rivers that we're fishing in, the oceans.

And this one is To a New World, so I'm gonna get a little deep on this. Why this was such a tough book in some ways, beside the logistics of the thousands and thousands of miles through boats and bush planes and on foot and horseback, it was also difficult because I always wanna write a book that's uplifting, that leaves the reader feeling like there's great hope.

And these [00:10:00] are some tough times, I think we could all agree that no matter how we look at it, and I wanted to write a book that's uplifting, and it is. But that was a challenge because everywhere we travel in the world, we find the struggles. And we've all seen that as anglers when you get to a river and the guide tells you, or the person you're with tells you, "You should have been here 20 years ago."

And, uh-

D. Roger Maves: Yeah.

Steve Ramirez: Yeah ... so, and we all hear that everywhere we go. I've heard it from Montana to Alaska to wherever I go. "You should've been here 20 years ago. You should've been here 30 years ago." But we never take the next step and say, "Well, why is that? And what can I do to fix that?" You know, I think it's a great adventure.

I'm biased 'cause I wrote it, but- ... um, but I think a test for me is can I live with a book for a two-year period of creating it, and then have to read it again and again to edit myself, and I still enjoy it? If, you know, I'm not sick of my own writing. And if the [00:11:00] answer is yes, then I think, "Okay, I can submit to the editor now". I, I really do think that the readers are gonna love this.

D. Roger Maves: Good. Good. Yeah. Yeah. Was there a moment in your travels when you realized the book was becoming bigger than just one of your other fishing adventures?

Steve Ramirez: I'll give two moments in a way. The main moment was that time in Portugal when I basically constructed the idea of what I was going to do.

And just for your readers, when they see, you know, these books that I've written, if I took even a moment to think with common sense about what I'm launching myself into, I would never do it. I

would think to myself, "How am I gonna pull this off?" But sitting on that, that cliff face in Portugal and coming up that this is what I was going to do, I was gonna make this trip all the way through the Southern Americas, and I was gonna explore it with my fly rod in my hand, but with, you know, everything I could do.

I was gonna climb the mountains and all that. I didn't [00:12:00] think how I was gonna get it done. I just said, "This is what I'm going to do." At that moment, I realized how big of an adventure this was. And then, of course, there's all those times when you're doing it, when you land that bush plane in the Amazon and the macaws are flying overhead and you're looking for jaguars, and when you are watching the whales breach in the Sea of Cortez. I mean, these are all moments that tell you, yeah, this is an adventure.

D. Roger Maves: When you, uh, you know, of all the countries that you did visit on this trip, which surprised you the most, and why?

Steve Ramirez: Again, really tough because you all have something incredible, but I'll just say Patagonia. Uh, and it's not a country. I'll say Argentina, but I'm really focusing on the region of Patagonia when I say that.

It really is a microcosm of the new world. I mean-

D. Roger Maves: Mm-hmm ...

Steve Ramirez: it's people, it is people from all over the world that have [00:13:00] settled there, and they've all made it their home. And so you have Germans and Italians of people of descent, quite like in the United States. But it's different though, because they still have retained a lot of their original culture. So the Gauchos themselves are pretty much the Spanish, French immigrants that came there to run sheep and cattle. You have a huge Welsh population. Surprisingly, I didn't expect this, but it's one of the largest Jewish populations outside of Israel. It also has a massive population of Palestinians. And so I found it really fascinating to see how even the land as you're driving through Patagonia and the Pampas, you see trees from all over the world.

You see trees from Europe and trees from the United States and trees from Australia, and then you see some that are from there. I think it's a fascinating place to just watch how people can come from everywhere and all be at home [00:14:00]

D. Roger Maves: Yeah. Yeah. You know, I, as we talked before the show, I was down there this spring with my son and, uh, yeah, the first night, I'm trying to remember the name of the town.

It escapes me at the moment, but we had to do a layover day and the town was... You would've thought you were in Germany.

Steve Ramirez: Mm-hmm.

D. Roger Maves: All the architecture and, uh, styling and everything was all German and, yeah, you're right. They settled there way back when, and, uh, they were all Germans, and that's their town, and it still looks that way. But I, I found that surprising.

Steve Ramirez: And they still speak German.

D. Roger Maves: Pardon?

Steve Ramirez: And they still speak German too.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah. Yeah.

Steve Ramirez: They're very friendly.

D. Roger Maves: The other thing I thought was, yeah, I thought was interesting about Patagonia was it reminded me of the '60s in some ways because people were hitchhiking and getting rides.

Steve Ramirez: Yes.

D. Roger Maves: Camping along the road, you know?

Steve Ramirez: Right.

D. Roger Maves: There's this one long highway, goes down through the whole country, and it's like people... I mean, it just, it didn't seem out of the ordinary, like it didn't seem that way in the '60s, right?

Steve Ramirez: Right.

D. Roger Maves: Everybody was hitchhiking and it's no big deal.

Steve Ramirez: They, they still felt safe.[00:15:00]

D. Roger Maves: Yeah. And people still feel safe down there, and they're, they're going, driving around in VW vans and camping out and, you know? I, I just thought that was great. It just brought me back, so.

Steve Ramirez: Absolutely. I definitely-

D. Roger Maves: Yeah ...

Steve Ramirez: Felt the same thing. There's just a, a total friendliness. There's... I guess in a way, you just said something really important about the '60s.

I find myself in some of these countries getting nostalgic for the United States I knew as a kid, and I'm not talking about, you know, how our companies ran. I'm talking about community and friendliness and people not being on their screens all the time.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah. Yeah. Uh-

Steve Ramirez: You know? Families going out for walks in the evening.

D. Roger Maves: Right. Right. Yeah

Steve Ramirez: And of course, if you go into Patagonia, you have to go to asado, and I have heart disease. I take an aspirin and I go for it. But I'm not going all the way to Patagonia. Actually, I'm, I'll be hosting a trip down there in February, and it, my 66th birthday will be the first day we're in, [00:16:00] at the lodge, and they're having an asado for me, and I'm gonna eat it. So, so to- ... to me, to me, it truly is food to die for.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. And, uh, yeah, the thing that we had down there was lamb, you know, spread eagle-

Steve Ramirez: Oh ...

D. Roger Maves: On a wood rack-

Steve Ramirez: Right ...

D. Roger Maves: In a quincho, they called them, and did the barbecue that way. Yeah. Yeah. Very interesting. Well, let's start ... You know, and the other thing it made me think about when, where you started the book in Portugal was, not to diminish your journeys, but you knew where you were going.

Those guys before you,

Steve Ramirez: Right ...

D. Roger Maves: Right? Some of them didn't have any clue what was ahead of them in the new world, right? So-

Steve Ramirez: Absolutely ...

D. Roger Maves: Yeah, um-

Steve Ramirez: I write about that. I write about ... I go to the church where they all knelt and prayed for their lives before they traveled.

D. Roger Maves: I bet. I would be praying too.

Steve Ramirez: A lot of them never made it back, and others-

D. Roger Maves: Yeah

Steve Ramirez: Chose to make it their home.

D. Roger Maves: Right.

Steve Ramirez: They landed in Brazil, or they [00:17:00] landed in, you know, Mexico, and they said, "Well, this is home now. I'm not going back." So-

D. Roger Maves: Yeah ...

Steve Ramirez: It's really an interesting journey. Um-

D. Roger Maves: Yeah ...

Steve Ramirez: And everywhere I went is connected to water. That's the common denominator. It's connected to a sea, an ocean, a river, a lake, and that's another theme for me is water is truly life.

D. Roger Maves: Yes. It's the liquid of life, for sure. Without it, nothing would be happening here. Yeah. Yeah. Well, you open your book in the Yucatán, uh, pursuing-

Steve Ramirez: Yes ...

D. Roger Maves: Juvenile tarpon, and that is a unique fishery. I've fished it as well. And casting in the mangrove tunnels is another-

Steve Ramirez: Mm-hmm ...

D. Roger Maves: Whole challenge in itself.

Steve Ramirez: Sure is.

D. Roger Maves: But, uh, why did you start there in your book? Why was that your first kinda destination-

Steve Ramirez: Well- ...

D. Roger Maves: For the rest?

Steve Ramirez: The two places I went in Mexico, I chose for various reasons, including the fishing that was there, the kind of habitat [00:18:00] that's there, and also what it was gonna give me culturally. But why I started out in Mexico was just that's the way I would follow history.

I mean, Cortés landed there, and I'm basically crossing the Rio Grande from Texas and heading down towards my ultimate goal of the tip of South America. And what I wanted to do is get both sides of Mexico, so I ended up first in the Yucatán. And you're right, juvenile tarpon- I would do that every year of my life if I could.

That's one of my favorite things, and, and you've done that. You're in those, an incredible biosphere area, and going down those tunnels of mangrove forest and shooting your line down the tunnel, you

hope. Um, my, my friend David at one point hooked a nice tarpon, and it leapt up into the tree branches, and it was about to land in the tree branches, and he kind of gave it a little tug so it could get back to the water. Um-

D. Roger Maves: Oh, geez.

Steve Ramirez: [00:19:00] You, you, you know how tight that is, you know, the branches and-

D. Roger Maves: Oh, I know how tight it is, yeah ...

Steve Ramirez: This thing was going to be landing in the tree branches, how high it jumped and how low the trees were.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah, yeah.

Steve Ramirez: It's such an amazing place. It was, uh... At one point, I mean, I knew better than this. I don't know why I said it.

It was pretty hot. I said, "I might just take a swim." They said, "Well, no you're not. Crocodiles." Yeah. I said, "Oh, right. I forgot. Crocodiles too."

D. Roger Maves: Yep, in, uh, the Yucatan they are there, yeah. Yeah.

You were in Campeche, you know, where most people go to for the juvenile tarpon, and you weren't just there for the tarpon. As you say, you like to immerse yourself in the culture. Can you give us one encounter with local people that changed the way you viewed Mexico in, when you were staying there in Campeche? Sure.

Steve Ramirez: Sure. It's more of a story than a, than a... So I would say the people of Campeche themselves- Are compelling. I loved the feel of the place, and what I said to my friend Raul, who [00:20:00] runs the operation down there, I said, "You know, one day I just don't want to go fishing at all." I know anglers think I'm crazy. I do that all the time. "I wanna go walk through the forest with you. I wanna go see a Mayan ruin. I wanna eat where you go with your kids, not some place that a tourist would go." And that's really the greatest experience. I think every angler should be doing that everywhere they go.

It's just a, a, a thought for me. I'm much more of a Tony Bourdain kind of traveler, and I took the day off, 'cause, you know, the truth is, I was catching plenty of tarpon, and a one-day difference wasn't gonna make that difference to me. But it did make a difference in that me and Raul went to the place where he takes his kids and his wife to have breakfast, and I had a traditional Yucatan breakfast there while a man played the plant- pan flute, and it's all families. And I mean, I was the only gringo in the place, let me tell you.

My name might be Ramirez, but I look, you know, as white as anyone else, and everybody just absorbed me [00:21:00] as a member of the family. Everybody just came over, and it was just a wonderful, joyous experience, and that's what I had all the way through that day as we just traveled around town.

And the other thing I'll mention to this is that the way they treated homeless people really struck me, and there's murals, beautiful painted murals on the walls of Campeche, and it's of homeless people that everybody knows. There's the lady that, she's now passed, but she fed the du- the pigeons, and her... she has a beautiful mural of her, and there's the guy that I got to know every day, who feeds the stray dogs.

And I was just taken that none of those people were left on their own. They were all given some sort of shelter, and people all kind of pitched in to make sure they were okay. That really struck me.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah. Yeah

Steve Ramirez: That really struck me. So I hope, in the evening I'll go on one [00:22:00] last thing is sitting out in Campeche and watching the families doing their paseo. They're just walking along the water and they're not on their screens. They're hanging out together and people are jogging, and it was really nice.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah, I went, we had a beautiful evening there walking along that walkway, and got out to the pier there where a bunch of-

Steve Ramirez: Mm-hmm

D. Roger Maves: Local guys were fishing just off the pier there, catching dinner, you know?

Steve Ramirez: Right.

D. Roger Maves: It was fun to talk to them for a while to see what they were catching and what they were using and, yeah, it was quite fun to... And they were, you know, sure, they wanna talk fishing. They, they want... 'Cause yeah, they're down there probably every day trying to, to catch their dinner, but, um-

Steve Ramirez: Right. They're trying to catch dinner, and I love doing that too, by the way. I did that in Portugal on that cliff. I didn't mention there was anglers there dropping lines 200 feet down off that cliff to catch fish-

D. Roger Maves: Oh, 200 feet ...

Steve Ramirez: And they did it each day to catch their dinner.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah. Yeah.

Steve Ramirez: You know, their relatives, their ancestors [00:23:00] lived off the sea, and so did they.

And I loved seeing that. And that's, you mentioned something. There's a common language. Wherever I go, anglers connect to anglers.

D. Roger Maves: Mm-hmm.

Steve Ramirez: You know, we start talking fishing, it doesn't matter what language we're speaking.

D. Roger Maves: Or kind of fishing they're doing, you know? It's always great.

Steve Ramirez: Right. It doesn't matter if they're-

D. Roger Maves: Yeah

Steve Ramirez: Using bait or metal or whatever they're doing.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah. Yeah.

Steve Ramirez: It's the connection to the sea or to the river.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah.

Steve, give-- we need to take a quick break here, but, um-

Steve Ramirez: Okay ...

D. Roger Maves: hang tight and we'll come back and, uh, continue our conversation on, on this journey to the New America. So, uh, hang tight.

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You're listening to Ask About Fly Fishing Internet Radio, and we're talking with Steve Ramirez about Mexico to Patagonia: An Angler's Journey Through the New World.

If you would like to ask Steve a question, just go to our homepage, askaboutflyfishing.com. Use that Q&A text box to send your question. Try to get your question answered on the show tonight.

Steve, I, I always ask my guests at this point in the show, you know, what's going on in your fly fishing world? So tell us where you've been, where you're going, and how people can reach out to you.

Steve Ramirez: Well, I'll start with the ending first. The easy way to reach out to me is on my website, which is easy. It's just steveramirezauthor.com, and you can reach out to me there. You also

can find out all the places I'm going to be, uh, like I'm gonna be at the Great [00:25:00] Waters Fly Fishing Expo in March. And you can read about the books, the movies, and things that are coming up on that website.

And as for my fishing world, um, I actually have... So this is the fifth book and the start of a new series, and almost no one knows this, but there's gonna be one coming out that is a standalone book called "The Seasonable Angler," and it's going to be a collection of my essays. That'll come out September the 7th through Lyons Press.

And none other than Nick Lyons himself graced me with the forward for that, which is such an honor. And the one I'm under contract now, the second book in this trilogy is: The, uh, Season in Lands of Fire and Ice. And what I'm doing there is traveling to places that are volcanic, primal, glacial, and polar.

And there's a reason for all this. There's always an underlying story to my books, so I'll be going to places like New Zealand, [00:26:00] more Patagonia, the Arctic, Iceland, the Scottish Highlands, and there's a story that all these things... So as you can tell, I have a lot of traveling to do again. So that's what's coming up.

D. Roger Maves: Oh, good. Good, yeah. Why don't you drop your website address again just so everybody gets that?

Steve Ramirez: Sure. Thank you. It's [steveramirez](http://steveramirez.com), R-A-M-I-R-E-Z author.com. Just steveramirezauthor.com.

D. Roger Maves: There you go, folks. Okay. Well, thanks for sharing.

Steve Ramirez: Thank you.

D. Roger Maves: Um, Phil in Kentucky wrote in here on the internet. He said, "Did you fish all the way along during your travel south from Mexico or only in selected spots?"

How many days passed without fishing at the longest stretch?"

Steve Ramirez: I had a couple places where I did not fish, and that was purposeful in this case, and only two places I did not fish is Peru and in Costa Rica. [00:27:00] I wanted to fish a lot but my plan was-

D. Roger Maves: Yeah ...

Steve Ramirez: to... Yeah, I kept finding places. Oh, I wish I had my rod here. But everywhere else I fished, and I fished almost every day. The differences was is if I, as I point out to you, I like to take a day off here and there to just explore so that I'm not just catching, catching, catching, catching, catching when I know I've had a great amount of fishing and I've got an extra day.

So in, for instance, in the Yucatán, I went walking through the, the forest, not really jungle there, and explored a Mayan temple. In Peru, I spent five days on the Salkantay Trail, almost died several times

actually, and to Machu Picchu and other places going through the cloud forest. And then, and I took a day off in the Amazon too from fishing. I took one day off... Well, kind of off. I was going out to, uh, vampire fish at night, but the rest of the day I wanted to just walk the jungle with the Kayapo warriors and my friend Rodrigo Salas. [00:28:00] I wanted to look for jaguar sign and, you know, be a wild man a little bit, and I'm so glad I did it.

People miss out on that all the time 'cause they figure you have to chalk up numbers.

But if you have five days of fishing and you're catching and catching and catching, but you've missed out on trying to look for jaguars, I mean, I think you've really missed out.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah, it's, uh... Yeah, like when we went to Patagonia, you know, we fished for six days straight, plus travel, and when I left, I told my son, I said, "I really think I need to come back here and just do a road trip down this road."

Steve Ramirez: Mm-hmm.

D. Roger Maves: You know, and I was talking about hitchhiking and stuff, you know, and probably forget the fly fishing. Just get out and-

Steve Ramirez: I- ...

D. Roger Maves: Meet the people in the country and-

Steve Ramirez: Sure ...

D. Roger Maves: And share-

Steve Ramirez: Ab- ...

D. Roger Maves: The food and yeah, yeah.

Steve Ramirez: Definitely.

D. Roger Maves: But that would be-

Steve Ramirez: By the way, Southern Patagonia is another one where I just, I just took a day and purposely took a day and went on to the big glacier out there in Southern Patagonia in the mountains of the Andes.

I wouldn't trade that for anything in the world, and I missed a day of fishing for [00:29:00] that. I wouldn't trade it for anything.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah, yeah. Much of, so much in the world to, to see. Yeah. Well, you started talking about the Amazon, one of the most biodiverse places on earth. Was there a moment when you realized you were in an ecosystem unlike anywhere else you've ever fished? Was it that moment?

Steve Ramirez: Oh, ab- absolutely. It's like... And I've lived and traveled a lot of places. You listeners may not know this, but I've explored about 33 countries and four continents so far. I lived in Africa for almost two years in the West African jungles, and I've been through the East African plains and Namibia, so I've seen a lot of things. But I'll tell you that the Amazon is unique. And like all places, like Patagonia itself, it's not one place. Different parts of the Amazon look different.

I was in the Xingu watershed on the Uari River, which is a crystal clear, which is rare. If you go to the other watersheds, it's gonna be very dark water, either milky like it is in the Amazon [00:30:00] itself, and I did spend time on the Amazon itself, or on the Rio Negro, very black water.

But this is crystal clear water. It's like fishing a mountain stream, except somebody that's very large. In fa- it's like fishing a mountain stream that has jaguars, caimans, anacondas, bushmasters, and piranhas, and, uh, electric eels. So, so, so to get there, this is why you know you're going someplace wild. You fly all day to get down to Manaus To Manaus, which is the capital of Amazonia, and you overnight there.

And you're in the center of Amazonia, but when you get your bush plane in the morning, you're gonna fly for four and a half hours to get to your landing strip. That's a lot of... And that tells you the distances and how much it changes. And by the time you get to the Xingu area, the water has changed to being crystal clear and just [00:31:00] gorgeous water.

I'll also say what's shocking, and I'm just gonna say this 'cause you know I'm a conservation writer as well. You can read about the destruction of the Amazon, but until you've seen it, you have no idea what it is. I've read about it for decades. I flew out of Manaus in a prop bush plane, and we flew for about an hour and a half over pretty pristine jungle.

Then you started seeing the illegal gold mines popping up here and there where they put a dirt road through. And wherever a dirt road made it-- And I wanna think about this 'cause we're talking about getting rid of our roadless rules in the United States, which is a horrible, to my opinion, a horrible idea.

Wherever the dirt roads made it, the jungle disappeared. And after an hour and a half, roughly, of seeing pretty good jungle, I went for another hour and a half of flying of seeing nothing but devastation.

D. Roger Maves: Wow.

Steve Ramirez: Think about that. I mean, I'm talking about areas where there are no trees [00:32:00] whatsoever, nothing growing except on the tops of hills or down in the biggest ravines.

It has been stripped bare. They-- Once they run a road in, the loggers come in and strip it bare. They burn what they can't cut and take out, and then they run cattle through. And after that's been wasted, then they'll run soybeans through until there's nothing left to do with it. I saw it for miles and miles and miles, and I took pictures out of the window in utter shock.

And, and here's the other part I'm gonna tell you. It's kind of all h- unhappy story. My friend Rodrigo Salas has put together, working with five different tribal groups, protected jungle. And it's a beautiful

thing to see because once you go through that horror of what one person said to me, "Well, that's just progress."

No, it's not. And then you get to the Kayapo lands, and you can fly for another two hours over gorgeous, living, thriving jungle, where the [00:33:00] canopy is full of every kind of a bird you could imagine. When you get there, when you wake up your first morning, when you go to sleep your first night, and you hear the howler monkeys, and you can hear the jungle coming alive, you know you're in a special place. But, if we had landed the bush plane an hour and a half earlier, we would've heard nothing but burning wood

D. Roger Maves: Mm-hmm. That's sad. That's really sad.

Steve Ramirez: It is. I just want people to know about it because I didn't know until I saw it. It's horrific. It's horrific.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah. It, it reminds me of one night I was traveling for business and I was in a hotel room, and, you know, I turned on the TV and I like educational and, you know, outdoors shows and stuff, and they had a documentary on, um, on timber, the history of the timber industry.

Steve Ramirez: Mm-hmm.

D. Roger Maves: And how basically, this was in the US, you know how basically the, as I remember it, the timber cutters just [00:34:00] went from coast to coast until they hit the Pacific and realized there were no more trees, and then had to figure out, "Okay, now what do we do?" You know? Of course, nowadays they're required to replant and, you know, they, um-

Steve Ramirez: It's not the same

D. Roger Maves: Yeah, yeah.

Steve Ramirez: And by, by the way, people don't know this, but I studied forestry and wildlife biology when I got out of the Marine Corps.

D. Roger Maves: Oh, did you?

Steve Ramirez: And, and I upset my professors often when I said, "You know, planting, monoculturing a tree just because it gives you board feet or pulpwood and wiping out every other species doesn't make a forest, it makes a farm of trees."

D. Roger Maves: Right. Yeah.

Steve Ramirez: It's a tree, it's a tree farm. And as outdoors people, I... that bothers me. I wanna see elk. I don't wanna just see lots of ponderosa pine waiting to become two-by-fours.

D. Roger Maves: Right. Right. But that's what... I'm just wondering, I mean, you would've thought we would've learned the lesson there, but now it's just different people doing the same things down there-

Steve Ramirez: Money talks

D. Roger Maves: Only worse, it sounds like. Yeah.

Steve Ramirez: Money talks.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah. [00:35:00]

Steve Ramirez: And now it's global money. So there, there were... along one of those tributaries of the Amazon I was at, where we had to do a stopover for gas up the bush plane, there's a big port there, and it's really something to see because you can see there's a dirt road that has tractor trailers in a line like they're a train going back and forth, and they're coming...

You know, they're going in empty, and they're coming out loaded up with logs.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah.

Steve Ramirez: And it's, it's this never-ending line. And then there's soybeans also being shipped there. So I don't wanna depress you here with this.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah.

Steve Ramirez: Okay. Here's the good news. Fly fishing is making a difference down there with people like Rodrigo and others like him.

They're creating work in fly fishing and ecotourism to keep the indigenous people to protect the jungles so that we can go down and see what it was and not have to only read it in a book, and it's still there. I'm telling people, if you can get down there, go. [00:36:00] Don't wait for someday. The Amazon trip is worth it.

It's gorgeous.

D. Roger Maves: What did you fish for? What, were you after down there, and which of the species fascinated you the most? Not necessarily a game fish, but just as a remarkable creature.

Steve Ramirez: Okay. On the Orinoco I was targeting peacock bass, wolffish, payara, which is a vampire fish, three species of pacu, piranhas, I actually like catching those. I was trying to catch a big enough one to eat.

Let's see, what else? Oh, and bacuda, which look kind of like barracuda, but with a funny nose, and also matrinxã, which is a very silver bullet kind of a fish, really incredible omnivorous fish to catch, and they are silver bullets when you get them. Each one of these fish is a fascinating new experience, and you fish for them somewhat differently.

So, and did you ask me which one I found most [00:37:00] remarkable?

D. Roger Maves: Yeah.

Steve Ramirez: Oh, God, it's so hard when it's such an incredible place, but I have to say wolffish. So primitive, so primitive, so... They're just a, a monstrous, and I mean that in a good way, not in a terrible way, eating machine, with vice grip jaws and a face that looks like, uh, you know, um, when I was in Africa, I saw a lot of Cape buffalo, and it was said about them, they look at you, Robert Ruark said, "They look at you like you owe them money."

That's how a wolffish looks at you, like, "Go ahead, try to catch me. See what happens to you." I found them fascinating and challenging. So yeah, it's really tough for me to narrow it down, but I... That was a fascinating challenge, and you kind of got to get into the jungle to get them, too. They're kind of in those backwaters.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah. Yeah. Interesting. I just was, while you were talking, looking it up to see what one looked like. I've never looked for one of those. Yeah. Interesting looking fish. Very [00:38:00] camouflaged. Yeah, I could see him just blending into the, the waters and the leaves and the, the wood in-

Steve Ramirez: Boy ...

D. Roger Maves: The Amazon. Yeah

Steve Ramirez: When they engulf your fly, it's, it's something to see.

I mean, it's ... They're serious. If it was, if your hand was still there, they would take that too. So it's, they're pretty, they're amazing creatures. But no, it's really hard for me to say, and I'm trying to give you a straight answer, but there's so many amazing fish down there. I actually really loved being around piranhas, and I even love it that I had to swim across a pool full of piranhas twice.

So, uh, I thought that was great. I laughed all the way across. So, um, yeah, it's an interesting place. It's definitely worth... It's a once in a lifetime trip, unless you can do it many times, in which case you should.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah. Yeah. How long were you down there in, in the Amazon?

Steve Ramirez: I spent about two weeks-

D. Roger Maves: Two weeks

Steve Ramirez: Time in the jungle with the Kayapos.

D. Roger Maves: Okay.

Steve Ramirez: And spent every single day with two Kayapo guides and a [00:39:00] professional guide that was usually Argentine or Brazilian. And every day was different. So every day we were targeting different things, and the habitats change and the techniques change, which made it so fascinating.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah. Yeah.

Steve Ramirez: You really have to learn the fish and their habitat. Like going after pacu, which is something I really loved doing. I mean, you're in areas that look like a Patagonian mountain stream and you're in the middle of the Amazon jungle. And they fight way, way above their weight class. So-

D. Roger Maves: Did you, every day, did you like go out saying, "Hey, we're gonna go after pacu today," or, "We're gonna go after peacocks today"? Or did you plan your day around that or was it more opportunistic?

Steve Ramirez: No, I actually, 'cause I'm a writer, I guess, and because I'm also, I love adventure exploring, I kind of plan my trips as if I'm there- One of my little storyboards. I plan my trips so that I make sure I get all the experience I [00:40:00] wanna get. So on the first day, Rodrigo and I went down really far away, down south in the river, downstream, and we were going after peacock bass, pacuda, and matrinxã mostly, and we caught all of those in quite numbers, especially the peacock bass.

And there you're fishing in some deeper pools with rocks and things, areas like that for these fish. Some you're fishing top water mostly, and the action can be pretty fast and furious when you get into a group of them. And, and one of the other things you have to be careful about is you have to land that fish and...

or you have to get the right fish to take your fly before all the piranas get it, because the piranas will destroy the fly the second they hit it. And, um-

D. Roger Maves: Interesting ...

Steve Ramirez: So that was the first day was going after matrinxã, which are just amazing fish to catch. They really are leaping silver bullets, the pacuda, and then the...

a lot of... We got a lot [00:41:00] of peacock bass that first day. The second day, I let them know that I really wanted to target wolf fish, and that's what we did. Actually, the second day was pacu. Um, and the reason I did it that way is because these are different little habitats within the greater habitat. So going for pacu, we're doing these...

We're wading. When we're going for the other ones, we're in the boat and we're fishing these deeper waters, and, you know, you can't wade in those areas. And then we went for the pacus. I'm wading these rocky streams, and you're... It's kinda like you're shooting under those tunnels of trees. I make a joke in the book that my guide, Ciro, who was awesome, I named him El Tigre, 'cause he had seen the most jaguars of anybody there.

He, uh... I think he sized up my talents because, uh, he didn't give me any real big comments about my presentation on my pacu. He said, "Try not to hit the trees." He realized that that was, that was my, that was my forte.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah.

Steve Ramirez: But, hey, I pulled [00:42:00] it off. I, I made it look like I knew what I was doing. And, um, and then the next day we went for wolf fish, which was a whole different thing, and I also tried to get, um...

I really was focusing on wolf fish the most that day, and you're going kind of into really... Sometimes it was so hot, and this is part of my metabolism, I burn up quick. I can't drink enough water, and so sometimes I had to just put myself in the river to cool down. And the wolf fish are gonna be in some of the backwaters too.

So we focused on those. Also, we caught other things, matrinxã, we caught peacock bass that day. So you get them all mixed up, but you kind of say, "I wanna go for this one," and you head towards where it's going to be.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah. Yeah.

Steve Ramirez: Uh, and then on my last night was the night that I tried to go after vampire fish, and it's the only one I targeted I did not catch. Totally my fault.

D. Roger Maves: Did you hook up? Did you see him or what was ...

Steve Ramirez: Oh, yeah. Rodrigo caught one right away. [00:43:00] There's, how easy it was for him. A person actually is talented. Yeah, I got eight strikes from them. It's probably gonna jump into one of your other questions probably here 'cause it's the most challenging fish that I found down there.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah.

Steve Ramirez: And the thing is that they're down deep. You're fishing for them. Some people say they're vampire fish because of the big fangs on them. Some people say it's because you fish for them just about at night. You know, you, you go out late, late in the evening when the sun's going down and the jungle's going to sleep, and that's

You get them in the deep pools with, with current.

D. Roger Maves: Mm.

Steve Ramirez: You're using a sinking line, and your technique is a slow, slow strip. And when you get a hit, the problem is in a bony mouth is that they tend to, from what I s- this is my limited knowledge, they'll strike that bait fish that they think they're hitting with those big fangs to stab it, to wound it, and then circle back around to explore it and [00:44:00] then decide to eat it.

So you really get a split second when you feel that first strike, 'cause they're gonna open their mouth and let go of it. And, um, I just wasn't fast enough. I had eight strikes, and I missed them all.

D. Roger Maves: Interesting.

Steve Ramirez: So, and I thought-

D. Roger Maves: Yeah, I mean, because- ...

Steve Ramirez: "wow, these are really, really tough" and then Rodrigo threw one time and caught one, so so it's...

I think if I was living down there, I could catch them.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah, well, you know, I mean, it depends on the fish, and it depends on the fly you're using and so forth because, you know, like, uh, up at the lake in the mountains here, I was... I fished and almost always do well with this little foam mouse that I use.

You know, and I just tweak that up along the surface, and the fish come up and hit it, and, you know, I missed a lot of 'em, and what I learned there is I had to wait a second, you know? It was like, let 'em hit it and take it down first-

Steve Ramirez: Right ...[00:45:00]

D. Roger Maves: then set the hook. Because if you do it too quickly, you just, they don't have it yet really. You think they do, but they don't. And so I had to learn the, the timing of that. And like what you're talking about, it sounded like you had to be very fast on the first hit, you had to hook 'em, right? There's no-

Steve Ramirez: Right ...

D. Roger Maves: Grabbing it-

Steve Ramirez: And- ...

D. Roger Maves: And taking it down. Yeah, so.

Steve Ramirez: Yeah, I'm not gonna make an excuse here. It was my miss.

But- ... I only went a- I only went after them on the last evening of the last day. I didn't try for them any other time. And the, the... another person I was fishing with there, he'd been going after them every single night. And right, he was with us on another boat, with Ciro, and he caught a beautiful one after missing many.

And I think it's persistence with those so you get the feel for it.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah.

Steve Ramirez: That's just my amateur point of view of it. If I go back down there in that watershed again, I'm gonna say to Rodrigo, "Let's go each night for payara [00:46:00] until I get it right." That's what I would tell your listeners is, don't skip on the payara. If you're gonna do it, go in the morning-

D. Roger Maves: Oh ...

Steve Ramirez: Or the evening when it's dark, and try for them for an hour, and then move on. Um-

D. Roger Maves: Yeah, I'm looking at the pictures of 'em. They do have a mouth full. Like, they look like those tigers down in, tiger fish down in, uh, Africa, you know?

Steve Ramirez: Right.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah, yeah.

Steve Ramirez: Different teeth, but yeah, those lower fangs are just, they strike the-

D. Roger Maves: Ooh

Steve Ramirez: Big fish, you know, stab it then circle back around and take it. You know, the-

D. Roger Maves: Yeah, that'll work. That'll work

Steve Ramirez: And you, and you won't see that 'cause they're down deep.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah.

Steve Ramirez: So, it's all, it's feeling it. You have to really feel it, and I think if I did it each day there, I would've landed one.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah.

Steve Ramirez: I just didn't give enough time to it.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah.

Need to take another quick break here, Steve, so hang tight with me and we'll do just that.

Steve Ramirez: Okay.

D. Roger Maves: Discover the power of Pure Skagit with Olympic Peninsula Skagit [00:47:00] Tactics. From delicate soft tackles to hefty steelhead flies, OPST's versatile casting system meets the demands of every angling situation.

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You're listening to Ask About Fly Fishing Internet Radio, and we're talking with Steve Ramirez about Mexico to Patagonia: An Angler's Journey Through a New World.

If you'd like to ask Steve a question, go to our homepage and fill out that form and send it over and we'll [00:48:00] try to get it answered on the show tonight.

Um, Steve, I did get another question from Phil down in Kentucky on the internet.

Steve Ramirez: Hey, Phil.

D. Roger Maves: He said, "A few minutes ago, Steve made an offhand comment that he almost died. What were the dangerous situations in which he found himself, and how did he navigate them?"

Steve Ramirez: I have... So some of this is my personal medical stuff. I travel all these wild places from Africa, you know, everywhere else I've been, and I'm always taking a big risk in some ways because I have a heart condition and was born with a heart condition, with a defect that makes it harder for me to get oxygen to my lungs and to my heart, and I also have asthma, and I have apnea, and we'll just leave the list there.

What happened in Peru is I was hiking between 13,000 and 15,000 plus feet for five days, and because of this heart condition I have, I'm even more prone. I'm also a scuba diver, [00:49:00] and I've been bent twice, and it's the same problem in reverse. I'm prone to elevation sickness if I'm not very careful. So what happened to me is I had both asthma problems with the thin air and then elevation sickness. So for five days, every single breath was painful.

On the first day, and I will not do this again without having some, the proper medication to help me get through it again. But on the first day, I got so bad that my fingernails had turned blue, my lips had turned blue. I was dying, and I knew it. And when I got back to talk to my pulmonologist, he said he's surprised I lived.

D. Roger Maves: Oh.

Steve Ramirez: How do I adjust to it? Well, my daughter was with me on this trip, and she started crying that night, and she said, "I know you. You'll keep marching on like a Marine until you drop dead, and I'll be stuck in Peru with your dead body." So what I did is for that one morning, we were gonna go up to 15,000-plus feet on Salkantay Mountain, and I thought, "Well, let's change the adventure." [00:50:00]

And I rented us two Quechua horses, and I paid a young boy to meet us at the top so he could bring the horses back down. And I said to her, "We're gonna change our adventure. We're gonna ride the horses up the mountain. It'll give me time to kind of recuperate." And it worked. I was still really sick, but I would've probably died if I tried to make that climb that day.

And, uh, I rode the horses up. It was really brutal. Even to my last, the fifth day coming into Machu Picchu, I was really suffering. It was, I had full asthma attacks. And, but I marched into Machu Picchu with the others that were with me, and they were all in their 20s so I felt pretty good.

D. Roger Maves: Oh, yeah. Yeah. Yeah, I, my daughter-

Steve Ramirez: It was brutal ...

D. Roger Maves: did the, the, the trek up there, and, you know, all they have to carry is, uh, I should say all they have to carry, she told me, was their day packs, but, and then these, you know, they, they don't call them, whatever the guys there, I don't know what they call them there, but, you know, like-

Steve Ramirez: Sherpas

D. Roger Maves: Sherpas kind of thing. But they go running [00:51:00] past them with all the gear.

Steve Ramirez: Oh, yeah.

D. Roger Maves: And she said she was just, she was, uh, so hu- you know, humiliated by the, how good in shape they were. But she said even with just a day pack, it was, it was not easy-

Steve Ramirez: Yeah ...

D. Roger Maves: At that, uh, those elevations, so. And you risking it with all your situation is, you know.

Steve Ramirez: Well, I-

D. Roger Maves: I don't know if it's admirable or stupid sticking-

Steve Ramirez: It's a little, it, it's probably more stupid, but I've done- ... a lot of stupid things. So far-

D. Roger Maves: They, they didn't give you as much joy, right? Yeah, yeah. Yeah, yeah.

Talking about moving on down to Pata- well, uh, yeah, moving on down to Patagonia here. And I wanna preface this 'cause Phil wrote in another comment here.

Uh, he said, "How many days was your journey to Patagonia, and what, was that what you planned, or did your plans change along the way?" And I wanna kind of modify that and say, you know, did, during these, all these trips, was [00:52:00] there much modification or like you said, you s- kind of storyboard it, so do you kind of stick to your plan?

Steve Ramirez: Well, again, being a Marine, we know that all plans fall apart when you meet the enemy, and the enemy is that everything's always changing. But that's part of what makes it an adventure, too. So in general, I storyboard, but things do change, of course, and I have to adapt. I

have to adapt when I'm having elevation sickness or in the Amazon when the heat is getting to me, and, or I adapt because I find a new opportunity.

So I was in Patagonia for three weeks, most of a month, traveling all over from the north to the south, so I really covered it a lot. And, uh, but yeah, I found new opportunities and I took them. And I would really cheer every fly angler to do these things. Don't just get locked into, "My guide says I'm fishing here, and I'm gonna fish there tomorrow, and I'm gonna fish there the next day."

Make sure that if there's something you need to see and do, you get to go do it, because [00:53:00] you won't remember all those fish.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah.

Steve Ramirez: After your 30th fish, they all start to blend. It's a trout, you know? Or even if it's a golden dorado, I don't remember all the golden dorados I caught in Argentina. I remember one or two, and I certainly remember lunch at the side of the river.

D. Roger Maves: Mm-hmm.

Steve Ramirez: If you get my drift. It's the whole picture. It's the whole thing.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah.

Steve Ramirez: It's, it's making... The other thing is, everywhere I travel, Roger, I make friends. I have friends now, I think one of the things I regret about all my traveling is some of my favorite people in the world live in other countries now.

D. Roger Maves: Mm-hmm.

Steve Ramirez: And we write to each other all the time with technology, but I don't get to see them.

D. Roger Maves: Right.

Steve Ramirez: Um, I have friends that I love in Brazil and Patagonia and Mexico, and that's another thing you learn is people are good everywhere. There's a lot of good in the world.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah.

Steve Ramirez: Oh, if you look... If you wanna be sad, go look at the news. If you wanna be happy, go travel with an [00:54:00] open mind.

D. Roger Maves: Right. Exactly. And yeah, I've found, uh, it's funny, but, uh, I... Th- this is just me. I mean, I talk to people everywhere I'm at, and my wife used to give me kind of grief about it. She goes, "You just talk to people in the grocery line about nothing." I go, "Well, why not?"

Steve Ramirez: That's me too.

D. Roger Maves: I said, I said, "You'd be surprised what you have in common with many people," and y- you know, you know? But, um, I always, you know, fishing always tends to connect you even though some of these places cost a exorbitant amount of money to go to. But, you know, when you get to the guides and if you ask to go have lunch with them or their dinner with the family like you said before, or, you know, see where they live or see where their fri- I mean, all that changes your whole perspective on the country and the world-

Steve Ramirez: Oh, yeah

D. Roger Maves: I've found. And just this short story. I was in Belize. The first time I was in Belize, I did this cave tour where the [00:55:00] guide takes you up this limestone cave and you go swim through, you know, pools of water and climb over rocks-

Steve Ramirez: Mm-hmm. Okay ...

D. Roger Maves: And all this stuff. And we went up a mile up into this cave system.

When he started out, he just dropped his shorts and he had his tighty whities on, and that was his guide outfit.

Steve Ramirez: Mm-hmm.

D. Roger Maves: 'Cause he didn't wanna get his shorts wet, you know, right? Years later, I mean, I'm talking about 16 years later... Oh, and he took us to his little, his house, which didn't have any windows. Grass thatch roof, dirt floor. His stereo system was a car radio running on a car battery. That was his-

Steve Ramirez: Mm-hmm ...

D. Roger Maves: Little stereo system. And then his wife made us lunch there. 16 years later, I went back to that village to see if he was still there, and he was, and we sat and we chatted for quite a while. But he was, uh, he then had a cinder block house, which is a big deal for that village.

But he had supported himself over all those years by doing guide [00:56:00] services, you know, up this cave system.

Steve Ramirez: Oh, yeah.

D. Roger Maves: And it was so cool to talk to him again and, you know. This is a place where women are down there washing their clothes and their babies in the river, you know. I mean, it's just that kind of-

Steve Ramirez: Right

D. Roger Maves: Kind of place. But yeah, it's... That connected me with Belize more than almost any other experience I had down there, and it wasn't the normal tourist experience, you know, to say the least.

Steve Ramirez: Yeah.

D. Roger Maves: Uh, yeah.

Steve Ramirez: Good for you.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah. Yeah.

Steve Ramirez: Good for you.

D. Roger Maves: Times like that really make the visit wonderful. In Patagonia, you know, it's got kind of a mythical status among fly anglers, so what aspects of Patagonia actually exceeded the legends or, or impressed you immensely?

Steve Ramirez: I'll say, uh, two things. One is the, just the natural habitat. Well, the one thing I'll say is Patagonia is not one place. So if you're up in-

D. Roger Maves: Right ...

Steve Ramirez: the northern part, I'm up on the Magellano or somewhere like that, then it's beautiful Andean mountains and clear [00:57:00] streams going through monkey puzzle tree forests, and there's parrots flying through even though you're chilly outside.

And by the way, the one thing that's a constant in Patagonia from my limited experience is wind. And then you go to southern Patagonia to the Lago Strobel, which people call Jurassic Lake, and it's a stark, incredibly vast high steppe with the Andes Mountains in the distance and condors flying over you and pumas hunting guanacos. It's just a totally different experience.

So the landscape is absolutely stunning, and it changes depending on which part you're in. That's the first thing that it's... If you think it's good, it's even better. The other thing is just the people. It's one of the places where I immediately fell in love with the people, and they have as many problems as we have, and they have a lot of poverty problems and things like that, but just a friendly, happy, wonderful people.[00:58:00]

And I don't think you get that when you look at a brochure. You're not gonna find out that-

D. Roger Maves: No ...

Steve Ramirez: There's so many really nice human beings down there that are just, they're happy to see you.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah. Yeah.

Steve Ramirez: As long as you're-

D. Roger Maves: They help you with what they know best. Yeah. Yeah.

Steve Ramirez: Right. And I also find, I'm gonna sound more like I'm, I'm being a travel consultant here, but pardon me, asthma.

So, um, I find that when they see anywhere I've traveled from Mexico, you know, Africa or wherever, if they see that you're interested in learning about their home, they're gonna go way out of their way. You're gonna see every parrot, every puma, every, every tree. You're gonna... They're gonna go way out of their way 'cause they're used to people going down there with their head down saying, "I want big fish and I want lots of them 'cause I paid money for this."

D. Roger Maves: Right.

Steve Ramirez: And I think those people are missing out on a lot.

One of the best meals of my life was on the side of the Magellano River with my friend Bob White, and we had a picnic under the monkey puzzle trees with the parrots over us, and [00:59:00] I will never forget it, and I wouldn't swap all the fish in Patagonia for that lunch.

So just telling you.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah.

Steve Ramirez: It's the whole package. It's your friends. I'm trying to be funny here, but I won't fish with jerks, so

D. Roger Maves: Yeah.

Steve Ramirez: I surround myself with nice people. We laugh a lot. We take care of each other. We have fun.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah. Yeah.

Steve Ramirez: Um, and I'm, like I said-

D. Roger Maves: You, uh- ...

Steve Ramirez: i'm sticking with them. We're gonna have fun.

D. Roger Maves: When you were fishing, was it Jurassic Lake that you were having the wind problems?

Steve Ramirez: Well, it's everywhere, uh, but Jurassic Lake is wind like you can't imagine. It's everywhere in Patagonia that I experienced wind, and learned a lot from people who know a lot more than me, and that's the other thing I'll mention.

I may have said it in other shows, but I keep putting myself into situations on purpose that I've never done before, and you have to not be afraid to look stupid [01:00:00] and learn. I love that, and I'm

always with somebody who knows a lot more than me, and that's, well, how am I gonna learn otherwise? So I was able to learn a lot of techniques to really beat that wind.

It's so different than what I thought by bonefishing in the Caribbean because the wind is so much stronger. So there's a part in Jurassic Lake where they, we're climbing over these lava rocks basically, and you come to this cove. And for people who haven't been there, this is, looks like an inland sea, and there's six-foot swells smashing into the rocks.

And you're standing on the rocks against the wind, and you see these humongous, and I mean huge, rainbow trout that don't seem like they could be real, and they're coming in like shadows through the waves, slowly like submarines, and you're trying to target them while the wind is blowing. So you end up throwing your arm up very quick, letting the wind catch your line and drag it up into the sky, [01:01:00] and then you slam it down towards where it's going to be eventually blown and drifted into the fish. So you adapt to the wind, but the wind can be powerful.

The flip side to that is we had one day where the wind completely died and the sun came out, the fish wouldn't bite. They, they were completely... You could see them swimming around like goldfish in a bowl, oh, you know, 30 pound, 20 pound goldfish. But, uh-

D. Roger Maves: Yeah ...

Steve Ramirez: But they could see us too. They were freaked out, 'cause they're used to six-foot swells and white caps, and they love it.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah, yeah. Yeah, the-

Steve Ramirez: They're floating on the blue ...

D. Roger Maves: Time we were down there, it was, uh, raining for days, and the word from the guide was always, "Hey, the fish are already wet. Keep fishing."

Steve Ramirez: Right.

D. Roger Maves: And they were... They had to eat, so, uh, we kept catching fish, and

Steve Ramirez: Yeah.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah. The fish were fine.

Steve Ramirez: They're wet.

D. Roger Maves: They're already wet.

Steve Ramirez: And it helps you too, because that little bit of rain hitting that water keeps them from seeing [01:02:00] you in that crystal clear water.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah.

Steve Ramirez: So, uh-

D. Roger Maves: Yeah, yeah ...

Steve Ramirez: So it's good. I love fishing in the rain.

D. Roger Maves: Was, uh, was, uh, that Jurassic Lake, as it's referred to, um, and I... Was that the place that really captured your imagination, or was there another river, lake, or valley that you visited that, that really- Tweak the hook so to speak.

Steve Ramirez: I'll pick two just to show the juxtapose to what you can get in Patagonia.

So in Northern Patagonia, I was with my friend Bob on the Malleo, which is just classic, gorgeous water. I think one thing I hear people say is it's like going to Montana to fish, and I say, "No, it's not." Uh, it's... I fished Montana, too. Uh, Patagonia's truly unique. The Malleo's this crystal clear, beautiful trout fishing, dry flies, swinging wet flies, hopper droppers, you know, the whole thing, monkey puzzle trees.

And it, that has its own beauty with the volcano right there, this incredible snow-capped volcano. That's one thing. What [01:03:00] Jurassic Lake does, Lago Strobel, is you're in a wholly different world where you might be able to say, "Well, that kinda looks like Montana." You can't say you've ever seen anything like this place.

It is an ancient... This is where they find tons of dinosaur bones. I was at a place with petroglyphs that were 4,000 years old, and I sat in the pits where they were hunting guanacos 4,000 years ago, and I could see the chips of obsidian that they were using to make their spear points. It was just really amazing. So-

D. Roger Maves: Wow ...

Steve Ramirez: Um, yeah, I would not trade my time in Jurassic Lake for anything, and I'm so glad I was down there at Laguna Verde, which is un- And I was actually offered to go down there again this year, but I'm gonna go somewhere else just because I can't stay as long for both places. Um, but Laguna Verde was just perfect.

And, uh, the third thing you have down there, by the way, is [01:04:00] lagoons, smaller lakes, lagoons that have large-

D. Roger Maves: Right ...

Steve Ramirez: trout in them. And then there's the, um, I wanna butcher the name, I think the Barrancoso River, I think it's called. Yeah, Barrancoso River. And that was one of the most challenging things I've done, uh, which kind of a funny story I don't wanna give it away so people will read the book. But when I asked Tino, "Well, how's this trip gonna be?" They said, "Well, we go a few miles through the canyon, climb over some rocks." It's a lot more than that. But- ... y- this is a

fast running, crystal clear water, gorgeous. The wildflowers were like I've never seen anywhere in the world. And the trout are huge.

They just, they're so big, they just don't seem like they could be trout. They're just huge. So you're fishing an eight weight there.

D. Roger Maves: For somebody that hasn't been to Patagonia, what advice could you give them to plan a trip down there? What should they keep in mind? You know, because there's, [01:05:00] like you've described, a big variety of-

Steve Ramirez: Right

D. Roger Maves: Types of fishing down there.

Steve Ramirez: Well, one thing I would tell them is, is talk to some people unlike me, are true experts. You know, my friend Bob White has been guiding there for 40 years. But do your homework. Find out what kind of experience you wanna have. If you're looking for a Andean mountain experience on a crystal clear river, you're probably looking at northern Patagonia.

I personally love the idea of going to a estancia that is owned and operated by Argentines. That's just me. I'm not saying there's not great operations that are run by Americans and Brits and stuff like that, but I at least wanna know there's gonna be an Argentine guide that I'm gonna walk around with as much as possible, even though my, one of my best friends is an American guide and I would go...

I did go with him. I would go with him anywhere. But I would say if you're looking for that experience, I would lean towards northern Patagonia. If you're looking for a otherworldly [01:06:00] experience, then you go to the south. But do your homework. See what people are saying about the place ahead of time. And I can tell you, though...

Oh, the other thing is you can end up on a working estancia, and I love that. I had that on the m- I'm gonna have that in February, where you're actually watching the gau- gauchos working the cattle and the sheep. It's really an amazing experience. It's not to be missed.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah.

Steve Ramirez: So I would tell people, if you can get a working ranch with great water.

Also, pay attention to the time of year. Ask questions. Find out what the water conditions are gonna be. Expect wind. Just expect it. Don't worry about it. Everybody has wind. You get through it, no problem. You learn how to get around. If I can do it, anyone can do it, 'cause I'm no expert. And, um, I hope I'm giving good advice. Do your homework. Decide how you want to experience it, and go in with an open mind, you know, a beginner's [01:07:00] mind. Ask questions. A lot of the fishing is gonna be just like you've done in Montana or just like you've done in the Catskills, but... And you're gonna use every kind of fishing. You know, you're gonna be able to use dry flies, nymphs.

I love slinging wet flies down there, and some streamers as well. It just depends on-

D. Roger Maves: Yeah, that was, uh, one thing that I hadn't tried before when I was down there is we were in one of those little lagoons, um, fishing for big browns in there and, and stripping streamers, you know. And, um-

Steve Ramirez: Yeah ...

D. Roger Maves: and, uh, it got kinda slow for me, and, and he says, "Here."

He says, "Let me tie something else on," and he tied a Pat's rubber legs on my line. And he goes, "Throw that out there and start stripping that." I said, "Really? Strip a Pat's rubber legs?" I go, "I've never done that before." He said, "Just do it." And I did and, uh, about five minutes later I had a fish on. And so I go, [01:08:00] "Well, there's a whole new technique." So simple, but he goes, "Hey, those bugs are swimming around there all the time down there of some kind or another." And, uh, yeah, it just works, you know? So-

Steve Ramirez: They're juicy. Right

D. Roger Maves: Yeah. Yeah. It's food. So...

Steve Ramirez: Yep. I caught some, some really nice trout down there on streamers.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah. Oh, yeah.

Steve Ramirez: And the other thing I'll say about going to Patagonia is if you can do it, take a side trip to the River Parana or somewhere in that area.

Even outside of Buenos Aires, you can get to go after golden dorado. You should definitely-

D. Roger Maves: Mm-hmm ...

Steve Ramirez: Go after golden dorado. Even if you get it for a day, it's an experience that people should not miss.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah. Yeah. Sounds good. Um, which single fish from, like, your entire journey do you remember most vividly, not because of its size, but because of what happened?

Steve Ramirez: Well, if I'm talking about a single fish, then I'm gonna say the, um, wolfish, one particular one, the [01:09:00] largest one that I caught. Now, I say I caught 'cause I'm saying that loosely. I don't really wanna give away the story, but let's say that it was quite a journey trying to catch this one wolfish and hook it three times in a row to finally land it, and it was a monster, by my standards anyway.

And that one really, that was an epic journey of traveling through the jungle to get to this wolfish.

D. Roger Maves: To get that fish. Yeah.

Steve Ramirez: Hook it, lose it, hook it, lose it, hook it, and finally get it. And if I'm talking about a kind of fish, then I'm gonna say golden dorado, because I love fast predatory fish. I love... I'm, I'm not, I'm a bass angler at home.

So that's the one that's, if you're talking about a kind of fish, they're just unbelievable to fish for. They're so aggressive that the fish they're chasing, the sabalo, are actually leaping onto the ground and dying of asphyxiation rather than be caught by a dorado. [01:10:00]

D. Roger Maves: Yeah. Yeah. When, um... You've now written extensively about Texas, North America, South America.

Have these journeys changed your definition of what home waters really means?

Steve Ramirez: Yeah, that's a great question. Casting Homeward actually was a lot about that, and I found that if I were to say where are my home waters, I'm gonna say the Llano or Guadalupe River here in the Texas Hill Country. But the reality is...

Oh, here's a good way to put this out. When I asked my buddy Bob, "What are your home waters?" He said, "Well, there's two of them, the Magello River down in Argentina and, uh, Bris- Bristol Bay area of Alaska." And he mentioned a particular river there. And we both fished them together. I, I went to Alaska with him and went down to Argentina so I could fish his home water.

I thought he was gonna say the Saint Croix that he lives right next to it. I think our home waters can be far-flung. There's [01:11:00] something that we get there and we just recognize that we feel at home there. And I have several home waters now. I can't really just say it's just here in the Texas Hill Country. I would like to see, like old friends, I would like to stand in the Malleo again. I probably never will. I would really love to see Bristol Bay again. I probably never will, but if I do, it'll be like coming back to an old friend.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah. Um- Yeah. Yeah. I hear you. Need to finish up here. Uh, we're running out of time.

Steve Ramirez: Okay.

D. Roger Maves: But one final question. When listeners finish reading A Season in Patagonia, what do you hope inspires them first to book a trip, to pick up a fly rod, or simply to spend more time paying attention to the natural world, or something else?

Steve Ramirez: Actually, that's really easy. I mean, obviously I want them to... I always say, uh, just do it. If you feel froggy, jump. I do things all the time not knowing how I'm gonna get it done, and just do it. So [01:12:00] pick up that rod, take that trip. But what I really want to do is through my writing, is for us to see the natural world, including the human natural world, differently.

You know, how we treat the planet, how we treat the rivers. If we say we love these places, then we need to treat them like that, and the same with the people. So that's why I really want people to get... And I'll just say one last thing about this title. It's to a new world, and the new world we're talking about there is the world we could create.

That's what I'm really writing about, the world we have all the power in the world to create, where the fishing is good and so are the people. I write uplifting books, but I don't shy away from all the things that are a challenge and are struggling. So yeah, I want them to pay attention to the natural world.

Pick your head up, notice the birds, notice the, the wildlife, the trees, catch the breeze. It's not all about just hauling [01:13:00] fish in. And to me, the tug is not the drug. That's competition. I, I'll say one more thing is I don't think fly fishing is not a sport to me, it's a way of life.

D. Roger Maves: Hmm. Yeah.

Steve Ramirez: It's not a sport. I'm not competing with myself. I'm not competing with anyone else. I just wanna be there, and there's plenty of times where I simply have said to whoever I'm fishing with, "I'm gonna go sit on that rock for a moment," and I watch the water fall.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah.

Steve Ramirez: Um-

D. Roger Maves: Yeah Yeah. Sometimes it-

Steve Ramirez: Yes ...

D. Roger Maves: It's best

Steve Ramirez: If you had to grab the whole thing, don't just count the fish 'cause you'll never remember them all.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah.

Steve Ramirez: Right?

D. Roger Maves: Yeah. Yeah, just and be present. Wherever you are, be present, and uh-

Steve Ramirez: Sure. That's all you've really got is that moment. There's no... As someone who has, should have died many times in my life, we've got now. That's it.

D. Roger Maves: Yeah. Yeah.

Steve Ramirez: That's it.

D. Roger Maves: I hear you.

Steve Ramirez: So do it.

D. Roger Maves: All right. Good. Well, we gotta wrap it up here, Steve, but hang with me-

Steve Ramirez: Okay

D. Roger Maves: Because we're gonna do some [01:14:00] giveaways, and one of them's gonna be your book, *A Season in Patagonia*, courtesy of Lyons Press. And we did, uh, I've got your books all listed on the website there on the homepage. If people are interested, they can find your books there, or I'm sure contact you if they want an autographed copy or something.

Uh, I'm sure that's available through your website and so forth. But you'll see everything that he's written there so far and more to come. And we're also gonna give away a membership to Fly Fishers International and a membership to Trout Unlimited. So we'll do that in just about 30 seconds. So hang tight, and uh, we'll do our giveaways.

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

There's still much more work to be done, and they need your help. With your support, [01:15:00] they can ensure that the flats fishery is a healthy and sustainable now and for generations to come. Visit btt.org and become a member of the Bonefish and Tarpon Trust today. Again, that's btt.org.

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

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

Now it's time to give away our prizes. The winners of our drawings are randomly selected from our show's registration database, and if you didn't register for tonight's show, it's too late now, but make sure you do so for our next show 'cause you don't wanna miss out on our future prizes.

And I have... Oh, I'm... Hold on a second because I need to get to where I need to be, uh, to try to find a winner here, [01:16:00] seeing if my database is gonna cooperate with me. Moving kind of slow here

And yes, looks like... Sorry, folks. Looks like I'm having a little problem with our database that does this random selection out of there, of the people that registered. So I'm gonna give it one more try here, see what happens. And then we're going to... Yeah, let's just, uh, it's not cooperating with me right now. Technical difficulties.

So we'll work on, uh, giving away a copy of Steve's book, *A Season in Patagonia*. And what's- Now I'm gonna ask a question. What you do is you go to that form on our homepage and fill that out, put your name, your location, and the answer to my question. And if you're first one that gets it right, then you'll win Steve's [01:17:00] book.

So now Steve, it's not actually out yet, right? It's coming out when?

Steve Ramirez: November the 3rd.

D. Roger Maves: November the 3rd. Okay. So you got a little bit of wait for it, but we'll get you in line to get a copy of that, so.

All right. So question is, Steve caught a lot of fish in the Amazon. What fish did he wanna catch that he didn't catch?

What fish was that?

Okay, that should be a pretty easy one, I think, given our conversation about it.

Steve Ramirez: Yep.

D. Roger Maves: We got kind of a delay here before they hear the actual question, and then they have to type. So let's see what... We can get ourselves an answer. So I'm, I'm here refreshing away, waiting for somebody to give me that answer.

No one? Come on now. Wasn't that hard.

Steve Ramirez: No. No, that's not, that's not that hard. I'm sure that everybody knows that.

D. Roger Maves: Oh, uh, I think I, I have, uh- Yeah. I was expecting the, [01:18:00] uh, common name, but our winner gave, it was a paraya, uh, Fred Miller in Denver. So Fred, congratulations. That's it, right?

Steve Ramirez: I think. The other-

D. Roger Maves: Steve, checking in. Yeah, or vampire fish, but that came in next. But, uh, he actually gave us the native name for that, so congratulations. Fred, send me over your, in that same box, send me your shipping address and stuff and I'll get you in line for that. Just like you said, don't expect it until November when books start shipping out, but you'll be one of the first to get it, I'm sure. So thanks for playing. I, I appreciate you listening tonight and listening to, in detail to what we had to say.

Steve, you know, I always appreciate talking with you and having you on the show. Your wealth of information as well as, like we talked about before the show, uh, you have a good look on life. And a good perspective on life, and more of us should do that. And, but I appreciate you being with us tonight.

Steve Ramirez: It was my pleasure, truly. Thank you for inviting me.

D. Roger Maves: You're welcome.

Hopefully you've all found the [01:19:00] podcast archive on our website. If you haven't, just look for the link at the top line of our menu, and in that archive you'll find all of our past shows, over 400 and some shows, which you can search by keyword, keyword phrase, and or one of our guests.

So you can search for Steve Ramirez and see all the shows that we did with Steve. If you enjoyed tonight, go back and listen to those old shows. I'm sure you'll enjoy those as well.

Our next broadcast is, uh, going to be on July 15th. However, I do not know, haven't solidified our guest yet, so it's an unknown.

I will let you know as soon as I make that final. And, but as you know, you know, we'll always have fun, it'll always be fishy and informative, and we'll learn something, I'm sure.

So 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, and make sure you're [01:20:00] signed up to receive our announcements so you don't miss out on any of our future live 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.