

Fly Fishing for Shoal Bass

Hey, to all you fish enthusiasts out there. Whether you're an avid angler or just curious about fish, we'd like to welcome you to Fish of the Week!, your audio almanac of all the fish. It's Monday, March 18, 2024. And we're on a week by week tour of fish across the country with guests from all walks of life. I'm Katrina Liebich with US Fish and Wildlife Service in Alaska.

And I'm Guy Eroh. And today we're gonna be talking about the king of the cataracts, the regent of the rapids. It's the Sultan of the stream, it's the shoal bass

And we are very pleased to welcome back Jay Shelton from University of Georgia. Jay is a shoal bass enthusiast who joined us for our red drum episode in season two, and he does a fantastic red drum impersonation. So if you see him, make sure to ask him to do that. And we're very pleased to welcome Fletcher Sams, Altamaha Riverkeeper, shoal bass aficionado, and fly tier extraordinaire.

Thanks for having us.

Let's pretend we're new to fishes. We're new to bass and we just want a basic friendly introduction. If we were sitting around the table together, how would we know it's a shoal bass that we're looking at and not like a largemouth bass or smallmouth bass.

If you had them in your hands and you were looking at them, it'd be a little bit more clear that they were not the same fish. If you see a shoal bass under the water, it's got these amazing tiger stripes along the sides and then a characteristic spot right at the base of the caudal fin, a silver dollar-shaped spot there. In terms of size, it's the biggest of these endemic river fish.

One thing that I noticed on shoal bass that's visually very strikingly different than a smallmouth is their bellies are very white.

You know, I'm reminded of the fact that our co host Guy Eroh wrote an excellent paper that is got a wonderful title, "the bass menagerie," I guess we need to open the can of worms, which is the current state of taxonomy, and essentially every other aspect of black bass management in the southeastern US is pretty wild. And there's a whole lot of uncertainty, a whole lot of new emerging information, but focusing straight up on the shoal bass. Historically, it was called a Flint River smallmouth bass. But going back in the records, this fish was lumped with a group of other fish that got referred to as redeye bass.

A lot of the old folks in the upper Flint River basin still call them redeyes. I'll post pictures of actual redeye bass that I'm catching, they're like "go here go there, you know, that's a tiny redeye."

like

We keep comparing them to smallmouth bass and I think just looking at them that's the most similar fish, but they don't really occur in the same place I don't think.

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Like what's their natural range?

Sure. their native range is the Apalachicola Flint Chattahoochee what we call the ACF. It's a gulf drainage comes down and kind of forms the line between Alabama and Georgia and then flows into Lake Seminole and then out the Apalachicola into the Gulf of Mexico. In the Altamaha they were originally introduced into the Ocmulgee branch and that's Atlantic slope drainage. So you've got the non native population draining to a different ocean, but they're right next to each other. About a 30 minute drive from Flint to the Ocmulgee in some places.

And at a micro scale, what types of habitats are these guys keying into?

As their common name shoal bass implies, they are more of a specialist than other basses that we tend to talk about. They do tend to thrive and require flowing water and shoal habitat, rocky substrate is really important to them. So where you find that good for show habitat. Larger rocks and lots of gravel, as opposed to sand and silt and clay. That's important for shoal bass. And in the southeastern states, we have a lot of physiographic provinces and one of the important areas is what we call the fall line, basically, where the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains transition into the coastal plain along that elevation gradient is really critical because that's where a lot of this shoal habitat occurs.

I kind of wanted to go back to our family tree discussion. How did all this speciation occur across these drainages?

Essentially, from an ecological perspective, what we've got here in the southeastern United States is multiple physiographic provinces. So we have all of these different eco regions within a given drainage. And then we have all of these different drainages which are isolated from one another. And that includes Atlantic slope drainage is that flow into the Atlantic Ocean and Gulf slope drainage is and speciation comes from that isolation. And then we're old old old down here geologically, because glaciation only came down so far. So these species have been allowed to persist over a really long period of time. And then we have all these different drainages. And so when you look at maps and you see, within the same river, you can go from the mountains to the foothills or to the Piedmont, go down across the fall line, get into the upper coastal plain. And then all the way down to the lower coastal plain, you got a lot of diverse habitat. So you've got the drainages, you got the geology is different, and it's old. And all of that leads to a lot of biological diversity in general, and more so aquatic biological diversity.

It's like a hotspot, it's cool.

It's great talking about habitat, and how cool this fish is. And it's distinct behavior and physiology and everything like that. But really, this is an elite sport fish. And so Fletcher, I don't know anyone who has dedicated more of their life to try to figure out how to best catch these fish in use. So how did you get into it? And how do you pursue these fish? Other than maybe Jay. Jay does it a lot too.

As far as figuring out the fishery. Ocmulgee fish is a whole lot different than the Flint. And the Chattahoochee fish is different too. Some of the forage that you've got in the drainage that I work in,

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you've got American Eel, you got American shad, you've got Needlefish, you got Mullet that come all the way up to the fall line from the coast and some of that forage just giant. And you know, it's very prevalent at certain times of the year that coincide with the shoal bass run. And so if you're not willing to try new things, it's going to be a tough fish for you to try to figure out. They have similarities with how folks are smallmouth bass fishing. And, you know, when I really got into fishing for Shoalies, probably about 10 years ago, and I was really trying to emulate smallmouth programs. There's this outfit in Michigan, and literally just started out copying their program for those fish and quickly figured out that a lot of the stuff that they were doing just doesn't produce like I wanted to, and so really trying to get into thinking like the fish. They're habitat specialists, and you need to become a habitat specialist to target them. And your tackle needs to be habitat specialists, too. There's a lot of general tackle that works well. But you've got fish that are living in high flows with a lot of different kinds of structure. And if you're not comfortable fishing structure in high flow, you're not going to do very well.

I was curious to hear what type of fly you would tie. What are these fish eating in that fast, rocky structure? And what are you trying to emulate with what you're tying?

The most common bait fish that I try to emulate, and it's mainly because the size range can go from very small to very big, is different kinds of jumprocks, suckers, hogsuckers, redhorse, those kind of color schemes on the bait fish flies, you know, I'll change to shad, if they're present in those waters. You're essentially trying to fish very large class three rapids, and you have a lot of plunge pools, a lot of pocket water, and a lot of really high current going on it. And you can have depths up to 10 feet in some of these and down to a couple inches. And you can have troughs, and buckets and all this stuff. And so a lot of the flies that kind of classified into big swim searching patterns. And then there's certain areas that you know that there's a fish in there and you're just trying to fish a zone. And one of my go to patterns is a deviation of a fly called the swimming jimmy. And it's got a deer her head and it's kind of buoyant and I fish it on a float and line. I can make long region casts and dive it into pockets. And then while I'm swinging it down, dive down, float back up where it's a couple of inches into the next little bucket and just hit a lot of areas by floating over structure and then down.

Fletcher was just holding up a fly that I don't know Is it four inches long, maybe?

About six and you know one thing that I think we were describing the fish in what makes it different than other black bass species is they got a big maw. Like the only mouth it's bigger is Florida bass and largemouth, right? So they had the capability of eating a very large bait and there are times of the year where they are very tuned in to those large baits.

How long does it take you to tie those Fletcher?

Man, you know, I've gotten to the point where I can do most of them in an hour. But getting to that point where they're kind of dialed in took a while.

Wow.

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In the development stages, I'll spend a couple hours trying to figure out like exactly what I'm trying to do. The river gives us feedback. And that's the cool thing about tying your own flies trying to figure this stuff out. It's trying to figure out okay, what is the forage? Where do they hang out? What do they do? What do they look like? What are the kind of the color phases that they'll go through, the sizes, all of that kind of stuff, but there's not a ton of information. There's not like a gut study, for instance, that I'm aware of on Shoal Bass. And so it's really just trying to figure out the species and what they respond to.

That's a good point where like a nerdy podcast. The biology piece is really important, if you want to understand the fish.

Have you seen any of his flies, Katrina?

He truly is an artist. And it's really stupid how many hours Fletcher and I have spent talking about nongame fish, just from the perspective of design for fly fishing. The amazing thing about Fletcher's flies is there's a lot under the hood. He is an artist and they look beautiful, but they really, really behave and they perform at their best under the water under real circumstances. So they're not just for looks. They work.

You know, I don't know that we've fully described what shoals look like and that's very particular habitat that you don't see throughout the country. When you're fishing these habitats, what's it like and then also, how are you fishing them? Like, what kind of extra gear...are you wading? Are you in a boat? Are you fishing from the shore? What's going on?

all of the above, even within the same river system, the shoals are so different. You know on the Flint and the Ocmulgee you have both granite shoals and the fall line. You also have limestone shoals further down. And those are very different fisheries. We have some shoal complexes that are essentially just water coming over a big granite dome with some pockets that are a couple inches deep. And then you have some other shoal complexes where you look at an aerial and you can't really tell that there's much there but you get there and there's just giant boulder fields, 10 feet down, and lots of current flow and they're certainly hold it in there too.

You just walking your way down the shore or wading?

When I am wading, I'm fishing it with a floating line. I've got flies that'll hit the bottom. And then I've got some weedless flies. With a boat, you get into "the world's your oyster" so to speak, and fishing out of the boat allows you to throw a bigger tackle and take different strategies. A lot of folks will tell you that the boats are just there to get you to the shoal complex so you can get out. Yes and no. I think the most efficient way to target the fish is on foot, but you're going to need a boat to get there. I've fished for him out of a boat completely different than I do wading for him. One of the main things that that wading allows you to do is a lot of the old timers will tell you there's a fish under every rock and it's certain times of the year it seems like that wading really lets you pick apart the shoal complex and there are places where I can stand in one place in probably have 20 to 30 different holes that I can hit. You're out of a boat, yes, you can anchor but you're not going to be able to get to some of those isolated holes and pockets that you could climb into wading. Now, the wading game, and Jay can certainly attest to

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this too, you need to be in shape you need to be spry because you can hurt yourself really, really bad out there because you're essentially just trying to swim around in a class three rapid.

Yeah, one thing I would add, we say a boat and primarily and this certainly is a fun way to fish but we're talking about a raft and we're talking about a float trip. A one way trip.

Okay, that's what I was picturing more like combining the two sports a little bit.

That's exactly right. So a raft is very durable, it can allow you to navigate this amazing diversity of habitat and paddle your way through the flat spots to get to these shows spots and target some of the specific habitat that we've been talking about. Rafts are great running up a shoal bass to habitat with a nice, big, beautiful fiberglass boats not advisable. And it's like I said, this is pretty challenging habitat. It's fun to get out and fish for them. But that combination of hitting some of the deeper areas from the raft as you drift down, and then stopping and anchoring and getting out is a really fun way to fish.

Yeah. And there are places in the lower watersheds where jet boats are more appropriate and there are people that try to take those jet boats into the upper habitat like fall on habitat. And I've got a really nice jet boat, I can get to all those places. But anywhere you can drop a trolling motor, you're going to be on top of fish. And the odds of you running into somebody that's waiting is really high. If you're trying to get on plane in a jet boat, you can't come off until you're in a pool. I've seen people rip up some of these show complexes while I'm out there waiting and just to get hurt.

Yeah.

What's public access, like trying to catch these fish?

Georgia has in the past, very splotchy patchwork of fishing rights due to being one of the original colonies. We've had two specific lawsuits that resulted in a bill that was now law that enshrines the public's right in Georgia to fish navigable rivers. And so largely that that issue has been fixed. I think the next logical question is, well, well, what's navigable and but I would say, as far as public access points for your kayaks, and your rafts and stuff like that, you've got a pretty good set of access. And we're always working on trying to get more, I'm working with the county right now and trying to put in a new boat ramp for them to have emergency services access, that should also access for the public. So...

Okay.

Very cool.

What do you do when you catch one of these fish? I mean, what's the fight like?

It's hard to tell whether or not the fish fights harder than other black bass or whether or not it better utilizes the current that it lives in. I've heard people say that it's a toss up between a smallmouth and a shoal bass as far as which one fights harder. The other fish that I like to target a lot is striped bass. And the thing that I think, if you're familiar with at least fly fishing, do you have a direct contact with that fly,

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right? It's a straight line. It's almost hand lining a lure. And so you really feel when that striper hits that bait, it almost knocks the rod out of your hand. Shoal bass have a similar hit. The only thing that I could describe the hit as is like a striped bass hit, they will kind of sip and nibble but they're the only bass that I know of that that will hit that hard.

And you're releasing them or keeping them? Are there limits.

I'm putting them all back.

Are they distinguished in the fishing regulations from other basses?

People don't really keep black bass as much anymore, like the last several decades, it seems like black bass is just one of those fish that gets released a lot.

There's a couple of exceptions that are location specific to that. I mean, Guy the place that I went fishing with you not to name any names.

Okay, fair enough.

There's I'm pretty sure that there's a world record that's killed every year in that place. Have you talked to some of the locals there and see some of the pictures that they're taking some of these fish on a stringer, you know.

But one of the interesting things with respect to the Flint River population, we have these invasive black bass. And in fact, there's a big annual tournament to try to remove and cook and eat as many of those black bass as possible that are not native. There's plenty of other good eating fish available in these areas. It's just that you know, with endemics in general, in especially with Shoal bass, because Georgia basically where it in terms of, of good habitat and good strong populations, we feel pretty special about this fish because it's pretty unique. It's been named the state riverine fish of Georgia, which is cool. I can tell you that Georgia DNR is doing their absolute best to try to get as much information as they can to make informed decisions. There are plans for surveys ongoing about trying to get the anglers perspective, we've watched, I hate to say it but the state of Alabama a few decades ago, we knew about existing shoal bass populations that have now been extirpated changes in regulations in Florida because the fish are becoming more and more rare down there. There's this question about whether or not we could do additional protection to create a trophy fishery for shoal bass since they do get to a pretty large size. And of course, it's not just about the anglers in the regulations. We're working real hard, and certainly river keepers and other partners are helping on habitat restoration and protection throughout the range of the show bass.

That's great.

Speaking of world records, Jay, you informed me about this paper that Andrew Taylor's got hot off the press. It seems like that world record Shoal bass might just be out for grabs.

Things are about to get shaken up in a pretty big way across the board with black bass with some changes. I think maybe this brings to light one interesting development people have been chasing record fish for a long, long time. But we have these fancy new tools at our disposal now that we never had before, the taxonomy is changing so fast, it's almost like every single drainage across the southeast is going to have a different species of black bass in it. And they're also being moved around. And but we have these newer genetics tools to determine the actual heritage of individual fish. So the more we learn about two different species that seemingly were the same and realize that they were not that this means changes to things like record, so we can expect some changes in including the removal of some historic fish. And I just can't imagine what that's going to mean. Because say you tell people, suddenly, "Hey, would you like to have a world record fish in your name? Would you like to go through that process?" So part of me gets really nervous about that. The other part of me, it's great, maybe we'll bring some awareness to some of these endemics because they are so special.

Aang everyone, time for a Minute with Maria with me Maria Dosal calling in from Curyung lands here in Dillingham Alaska. Big huge shout out to our guests, I really enjoyed hearing about the creative sessions of how they take the time to tie their own flies and how they try to make them really look realistic. And that's such a beautiful thing. The act of sitting down and working with your hands and tying these flies is such a meditative act. It's so beautiful to hear how taking the time to do that, and through trial and error, they can catch these wonderful fish in these beautiful habitat. So I strongly encourage you to always be working with something with your hands, whether it's carving, beading, tying flies, working on any kind of construction projects or art projects, just do something in that creative realm to help you get in that meditative state just so good for you and your brain. So get out there and enjoy the fish. Thanks for listening. Qağaasakung. See you next time.

I've heard fantastic stories about fishing for shoal bass. And one thing that's really cool about it is the habitat they're in and the adventure of going and getting them not just the fight not just the big fish but everything you have to go through. Fletcher was saying you're basically swimming in class three rapids, but if you could each share your best shoal bass story.

When I knew almost nothing about how to fish for shoal bass, I was fishing with a friend on the Ocmulgee and I was up at a shoal and had been fishing for a while and caught a few small fish. And I was fishing a woolly bugger because everything eats a woolly bugger. And I was trying to be as patient as I possibly could because it was hot and I knew that I needed to get that fly down as deep as I could and try to get a dead drift. Kind of like you would for trout fishing. And my fly stopped, my line got really, really tight and I was confident that I got hooked on the bottom and then the fly started to move and I figured I just hooked a tree that was floating downstream. And then it started to move a little bit more. And I thought I had hooked a giant turtle. And then it really took off and shot upstream a really really long distance. And I realized that I had a big shoal bass and it got around some rocks and I ended up falling in a steep run holding the rod the entire time. By the time I got flushed downstream far enough that I could put my feet on the ground again and I stood up I realized I still had that fish on. My friend who was way downstream thought I was in trouble and risk of drowning. So he started rushing upstream to where I was when I finally landed that fish. It was just the top of my head that was above the water. So I literally landed the fish underwater. About the time my friend got there and said, "Are

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you okay?" And I just raise it up out of the water and said "Oh, yes, I'm really okay." And so that's one of the stories.

Beat that Fletcher.

I've gotten out there and hurt myself. You know, my shins look like professionals skateboarders shins just scarred up shoal bass fishing. For me one of the coolest days efficient, and it happened within 100 yards of each other. And it was with Jay and another one of our friends Travis Smith, another flight time nerd the biggest shoal bass I've ever seen in my life. It was on one of those flaws that kind of dies down and Jay was fishing one of those flies and cast it right up against the bank. And I thought, and I'm pretty sure he thought too, that he snagged a tree right there at the bank. And the tree started moving and saw that thing jump. I think we all three had the same reaction of just "that's a record fish" and then of course it hopped off and about 100 yards down, we got into a really fast shoot with a kind of calm eddy out to the side and with the same fly Jay hooked, I think it was like a 16 inch fish and a fish about the same size tried to eat that 16 inch fish. As an angler, there's days that haunt you. Those two fish absolutely haunt me and I think the thing that makes it stand out for me was the proximity of those two fish. I mean, there are definitely two different fish but just seeing eight pound class fish right back to back, especially that one exhibiting that cannibalistic behavior was just wild.

So wear shin guards kneepads, life jacket, practice parkour before you go like what are some other ways to prep?

Yeah, if you haven't gone before, don't wear your waders. Don't do it and wait your months because you're going to really put yourself in danger. If you wear rubber, you're going to really hurt yourself out there bad. Everyone wear felt, we all wash our boots before we move drainages. I think the first time you do this, and especially if you're planning on getting out of the boat and wading some of these shoal complexes, a lot of it's bedrock. And if you get your foot wedged in a crack, you can't move the rock to get out of it. A couple of times, I have gotten my leg wedged into a crack and muddy water that I didn't know was there and kind of gotten pinned under water.

Buddy system too then?

Don't do it by yourself. Just take your time, be careful, the fish are gonna be there for the next time. But just be safe, take it slow.

And that felt issue like we're not allowed to wear felt waders up here in Alaska due to, varies by state, just spread of invasive species. So yeah, I think that's a good point to make sure you're cleaning those and dry and I'm really good.

The other thing we do pay very close attention to the flows, go to the USGS gauging station, figure out where the local gauges are, and pay close attention to what those flow levels are. That doesn't mean we won't go in the waters too high, it's just that will be a different strategy raft as opposed to wading.

You want a little stain on the water, you want it clear?

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If you look at my flies, I spend a lot of time overcomplicating a fly to be less suggestive and more realistic. And that's because I fish a lot of low clear flows. And it's trying to figure out how to get the fish to trigger in a clear low flow staying certainly doesn't hurt anything. And there's a point of diminishing returns with stain and fly fishing versus conventional tackle. But I'll fish reckless levels of flow.

So how are these fish doing in their native range, and then how they do on where they've been introduced in the Ocmulgee?

In certain parts of that range. There have been a lot of habitat alterations over, you know, really centuries, changes in land use that have had an impact on these fish because they require that show habitat. And that definitely is a challenge for conservation and management at this particular species. If you think about the fact that historically this was a species that you could find in three different states, Georgia, Alabama and Florida, by far the populations in Georgia are doing better. But historically, the majority of the habitat was in the state of Georgia. Now granted, the the Chattahoochee River becomes the border between the states of Georgia and Alabama. Unfortunately, they're not really doing any doing very well at all on the in the tributaries on the Alabama side essentially extirpated from those tributaries. And now, there's tremendous concern about the Chipola River down in Florida. So that basically brings us to Georgia and the populations in Georgia. And certainly the Flint River has got the strongest population, certain areas of the Flint is doing quite well. In other areas we have cause for concern about habitat issues that I've referred to. Which brings us to the adjacent drainage, and certainly plenty of threats in the Ocmulgee drainage but does appear interestingly enough that because there's really really good habitat in the Ocmulgee. When provided with really good habitat, this species does thrive. And there's a strong population of shoal bass in the Ocmulgee in addition to the habitat threats, the introduction of non native bass is another really, really big cause for concern throughout the range.

When we think about threats, I always like to think about what's being done and Fletcher I'm curious what river keepers do in general, what your group is doing. And then Jay, what you're doing with your connectivity team.

We're part of Waterkeeper Alliance. We were started up in New York with the original Riverkeeper on the hub Hudson River and it was founded by a bunch of fishermen. They started by essentially catching polluters and paying themselves a bounty with the fines. Now there's close to 400 Waterkeepers that are assigned waterbodies all over the world. There's one in Iraq, it's really grown as a movement with our base, and we cover about a quarter of the state of Georgia. So we have a huge base and it goes all the way to the coast, the majority of the area that we covers is fairly rural. What I tell people is there's 1000 things we need to do 100 things we have to do and 10 things we actually can do. If you're familiar with the One Health concept, we tend to prioritize environmental issues that have a human health component, specifically the biggest issue from a pollution standpoint that we're working on, within the shoal bass territory of our watershed, probably coal ash, we have the largest coal burning facility in the Western Hemisphere.

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On the conductivity side of things. I'm a member of the Georgia aquatic conductivity team. And we have aquatic connectivity teams throughout the southeastern United States. Now, we focus on three things, we have so many hundreds and 1000s of obsolete, and in some cases, dangerous dams in the southeast. But those obsolete dams that are no longer being utilized are serving any function worth whatsoever. We focus on trying to facilitate the removal of those structures as a way to improve aquatic connectivity for aquatic species. The other thing that we focus on is culvert replacement.

Love culvert replacements.

Exactly. So that's a big deal. The third area would be ecological stream restoration, so trying to reconnect streams to the floodplains that they were historically connected to. We've had some success stories in the southeast, including some that are actually in the planning stages, but are going to happen pretty soon, that will have a direct impact on shoal bass habitat. So we're really excited about following those.

At a real basic level, how does a structure like a dam or an undersized culvert change a stream that a shoal bass might be inhabiting

Fish have got to find a way to encounter whatever it is that they need to eat. And of course, that's going to change throughout the year. And then they have got to complete their lifecycle. There are ways in which barriers to free up and downstream movement of a fish can have negative effects on both of those areas. For example, when you put up a dam that disconnects a fish from the area where it spends most of its time feeding from the area where it must go to breed. And in the case of the shoal bass, they must find these Swift, turbulent shoal habitats. If you disconnect that, then basically those fish are going to suffer. And there's been a lot of those disconnections within the drainage is where shoal bass and these other endemic basses occur. So that's a big cause for concern. We have these big dams on the bigger rivers. But each of these rivers is fed by 1000s of tributaries. And those tributaries are crossed over by 1000s of roads. So whenever a tributary and a road intersects, there's a culvert a lot of them are very, very old. This is really a part of the infrastructure of our country. And it hasn't necessarily always been dated, very much outdated. And so it's a really, really big issue for us. It's like death by 1000 cuts, we see small scale, localized impacts, and all of that contributes at the watershed scale for somebody like Fletcher as as steward of the entire drainage basin, he sees the effects of those things to the ocean.

This is a nationwide issue.

So if someone wanted to take out a dam that was maybe blocking passages, Shoal bass, it's just as simple as make sure you contact the landowner go out with some dynamite blow it up.

Well, I wish it was that simple, because then there'd be a lot more YouTube videos with lots of explosives. That would be more entertaining. But the reality is that it is a very complicated process with multiple levels of permitting involved. Any land disturbing activity in the waters of the United States is subject to the same level of review, which basically means that if you're going to remove a dam, you're going to go through the same process as someone who wants to build a great big development in a

given area. So it is very complex. We are working as part of our aquatic conductivity team effort to try to streamline that, especially for issues where habitat restoration can be documented as a result of the removal of that dam. But there's other reasons that dam removal is important. A lot of these dams are really, really old, some from the 1800s. They're falling apart and they're dangerous. So we do from time to time, unfortunately here about drownings associated with these low head dam structures. So safety is another cause for concern. They've been a few areas where there's been tremendous economic development that has resulted from the restoration and the efforts after that dam was removed across the board. There are some positive reasons above and beyond just the basic protection of aquatic ecology.

Yeah, final calls to action about these fish that folks can think about.

I haven't caught every single, like bass species, but of the ones that I target. Nothing compares. And if you are a small mouth angler in particular, and don't have that kind of habitat in your neck of the woods, this is worth the trip to come down and experience this. It's just its own thing.

If there's a fish, especially an endemic fish that you're passionate about, as we are about Shoal bass, I would ask you to learn more about all of the different stakeholders that are involved involved in that management. And because it really does take a diverse group, we work a lot with NGOs, like the river keepers, we work with academics to try to gather good information, working with that state agency, the Department of Natural Resources, and a lot of other entities to try to create some synergy. Because we can't just focus on the fish, we can't just focus on the people. We can't just focus on the habitat. And there's just so much work to be done that if you're passionate about a fish, try to try to get more involved and learn more about what other stakeholders care about that same resource.

Awesome.

For folks that are trying to figure out a fishery, especially one that you don't know a lot about the actual target fish. If you're not talking to the scientific community, if you're not talking to Guy, you're not talking to the Jay in your area. You're doing it wrong. I know more about how to fish for shoal bass that I learned from a biologist than I ever would from professional bass fisherman.

Yeah, that's a great point. Cool. Thank you both so much. It's been super fun.

Thank y'all very much.

Enjoyed it.

Get out there live with, live from, discover and enjoy all the fish especially you're really cool endemics like the shoal bass. Thanks for listening to fish of the week. My name is Katrina Liebich. And my co host is Guy Eroh. Fish of the week is a production of the US Fish and Wildlife Service, Alaska Regional Office of Communications. Our production partner for the series is Citizen Racecar. We honor thank and celebrate the whole community, individual tribes, states, our sister agencies, fish enthusiast

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scientists and others who have elevated our understanding and love as people and professionals of all the fish.