

brew-alistair-2018-04-24.mp4

Alistair Brew [00:00:10] I discovered on my own. I think it was, as a, as a wee boy. I just had an inkling to fish and to hunt. And then I was making traps and fishing and all that stuff. My father didn't fish, nobody really else in the family fished or hunted so. It was just there.

James Thull [00:00:27] And this was in Scotland?

Alistair Brew [00:00:29] That was in Scotland.

Alistair Brew [00:00:36] It started in the sea, off the rocks and the pier for cod and whiting and crabs and anything. And then it slowly progressed to coarse fishing, any fishing. And anything that I can I just loved fishing so. And it then, I suppose, progressed into a passion for fly fishing and game fishing. Mostly salmon, trout and yeah.

Alistair Brew [00:01:08] No... It, it. That's, that's a bit like saying what's your favorite bottle of wine or favorite bottle of whiskey? Or what's your favorite music? Nah, there's, there's horses for courses. Nile Perch fishing here is phenomenal. But so's fly fishing, for sail fishing the Kenyan coast. But that doesn't compare in any way to fishing for salmon in Norway. So.

Alistair Brew [00:01:36] I think, I think fly fishing, it's, it's not so much that it's the number of fish you're catching, it's how you're catching them. And it's, there's something very pleasing, it, it's the actual casting of the line, and the line going out, and fooling the fish to think that what you've tied on, this bunch of fur and feathers is something that it wants to bite. You see it biting, you strike on it. It's very sporting, it's very sporting. So it's, it's a challenge, you know? So I think that's that's what it is. I fish for Nile Perch with a fly and, that's, that's fine.

James Thull [00:02:20] Did you have any luck?

James Thull [00:02:21] Yeah. Yeah, yeah, no. Biggest I've caught is 28 kilo, Upper Madison, on the fly.

Alistair Brew [00:02:31] By books, basically books. There was, I went to a public school in Scotland. And there was a fly fishing club, you know, like [unintelligible] we all got together. But it wasn't anything that anyone taught you. You see, when you read books on how to tie them. The more you do it, the better you get at it. And then you'll see tricks, and somebody else that ties flies and 'this is how I do this.' 'Oh that's interesting.' So.

Alistair Brew [00:03:02] Brown Trout are fine. But, but there is a serious problem with the Atlantic Salmon. And no one can really say exactly what it is. I think it's a combination of everything. It's, um, degradation of the spawning and in, inland where they come to, to breed. But I think the main root is, that when they're coming back from where they feed off the [unintelligible] and something's happening out at sea. They're not coming back, like they used to. Personally, I don't think that's got anything to do with global warming. I think it's got to do with human and other predation.

Alistair Brew [00:03:55] No. I'm, I'm I'm a staunch... I'm not denying that climate change is a problem in the world. But the biggest problem the world has got is human population.

Well, well before climate change. The world's going to go under, due to human population pressure. Before global warming.

Alistair Brew [00:04:17] It depends where you are. If you, if you're here in Africa, or a third world country--or a developing world country, is maybe politically more correct-- is that it's just the human population. Take Merchison Falls. How can we morally justify coming over, spending 300 dollars for a yearly fishing payment to catch fish, to put them back, when there are people starving? You know? But what do you do? Do you allow them to fish? And then ruin it? Because that's what will happen if you say "right well you, you, you are allowed to fish in that park. You're hungry. Fish in the park." It will be plundered. So. It's a, it's, it's a moral dilemma you have. What are you going to do? Are you going to keep it? Or not? And that, that is only getting worse, the bigger population gets.

Alistair Brew [00:05:17] Yes, it can. funnily enough, we're talking about that. I've just being back from Merchison and we're talking about that when we're up there. It's Nile Perch if we take just Nile Perch. Nile Perch are an incredibly fast growing species. And they're very, very prolific breeders if you have the big females. It's always the females are the big, same in cod. Big, big cod. And they- millions and millions of eggs they produce, but they have to be big. To preserve that you have to put them back and you have to keep that. If you have an area or a place, a lake, say a lake, and you have 50 fishermen. Or 50 families fishing around the lake. It would be economically feasible for you to say "how much do you make from your fishing? Your sustainable fishing here? A year, per family." Say it's a thousand dollars, say it's 2000 or whatever it is, that they make from catching all these small little Tilapia and baby perch and stuff. Say, "right fine. We will, we will pay you that. Every year. If you don't fish here. You don't fish here." The fishing in that spot would become so, so good, in my belief, that you could have a camp and have people coming to fish and putting it back. The problem then comes in... I don't think that, in the long run, would be sustainable, because in 20 years time, those 50 families will be 200 families. And they're going to be going 'well, we want, we want more.' How? So, it's the human population. So if you're in a place like, you're from Montana, pristine, you know? The Big Horn River for trout and such, it's well-managed, it's well looked after, it's great. You take Alaska. Fishing off Alaska, or off Vancouver, where I've been fishing a lot. It is managed very, very well now. You've learned from mistakes in the past. The cod, go fishing for the cod, often you find them. But it's managed and it's just, and it will be, and it will carry on being sustainable. But when you have population growth like Uganda, it, it ain't going to be sustained.

Alistair Brew [00:07:49] Wherever, wherever humans smile there's hope. So. But, how, for, for fishing I've seen a huge, you know, change in the fishing at Merchison Falls. We're not just talking about Uganda, fishing in Uganda, that's a huge change in fishing. And it's not just the overfishing. It's all up and down the River Nile. There's more, well people chopping down forests, but they're growing their crops close to the river bank. Which gives a runoff, which makes the water dirtier which puts more detritus in the river, and so the river's not clear. I have pictures of myself 15 years ago with, standing in the water, holding a Perch, and you can see my feet in the water. It's crystal clear water. Now, you don't get that, ever.

James Thull [00:08:45] So that kind of agricultural impact on the rivers?

Alistair Brew [00:08:50] Yeah. And you know it's fish will adapt, fish are there. Don't get me wrong, there's still fish there. We caught a 60 kilo fish. There's still plenty fish there. But, for how long is that going to be sustained and how can you, you know, changing tack

onto gorillas. Which is, Uganda's famous for. Those two populations go, there's one in [unintelligible] and there's one in [unintelligible]. And they're completely encircled. There's no forest in between them. So they can't migrate. Population, if you look after that population of gorillas, it's only going to grow. Where are they going to go? So, so long that they don't have the population dynamics that cod do. Animals. They don't breed quickly. Not a massive population explosion. But it will happen. Where are they going to go? So.

Alistair Brew [00:09:46] Oh yeah, very much so. Yeah. It's, um, up at Merchison Falls when I first arrived here, all the fish were killed. And that didn't matter then, because there was maybe two three people fishing a year. Now when you have a hundred people fishing a year. It's got to end, yes, you know? What do you do? You have a captain, you know, the captain in the boat. Is helping you out, with one of the rangers, two of the rangers. And they're in kind of that kind of old fatigues and flip flops and they're hungry and you're pulling in a 30 kilo fish. Morally, it doesn't feel right to chuck it back. When he's hungry. Things have moved on, it's a lot more sport fishing or things are more organized. So, you can't just kill every fish. You can't and it's unsustainable.

Alistair Brew [00:10:42] They're, they're, they're fine. The only worry, matter of concern is the salmon. The salmon, Atlantic Salmon the world over is... And no one can really say what it is, exactly. It's a combination of things. But Scotland, as a fishing destination, there's places I go. And yeah, I expect to catch between 10 and 20 trout a day. Up to 3, 4 pounds.

James Thull [00:11:08] All on the fly?

Alistair Brew [00:11:09] All on the fly.

James Thull [00:11:10] Dry fly, wet fly?

Alistair Brew [00:11:11] Both. In Scotland, there's a special way of fishing and you use a, called a dropper. And it's a big bushy fly you have on the top. And the fish have another two flies, and this fly you kind of put a lot of floatant or grease on it. And it floats and it bounces on the surface and that attracts the fish out. They sometimes don't take that, but if there's a disturbance in the water and they see it and they'll take one or the other flies. And it's great fishing from the bank casting out, and your dibbling this fly along.

James Thull [00:11:43] That's wonderful.

Alistair Brew [00:11:44] Very therapeutic. Going in the Highlands of Scotland. Nobody about, there's places there, that there's a place I take every year. Up near Loch Murray. And it's just wonderful. Just being up there fishing. Yourself, a couple of friends. Beautiful. And it's, it's, as it's always been and it will be like that for a long, long time.

Alistair Brew [00:12:11] Yes. Yeah. Yeah. I mean you get to places like Vancouver. British Columbia. Alaska. Norway. Scotland. Uganda. Kenyan coast. All of these beautiful places and it's, I'm not one for lying on a beach or, I can't climb a mountain just for the sake of climbing it. But if there's a loch on the back of a mountain, I'll climb it.

Alistair Brew [00:12:45] Not a lot. It's not something I made a plans, 'oh I got a business plan I'm going to do it'. I might see an artist, I paint. I'm a painter. I do water colors for five years. And I lived in Sweden for 20 years. And I was married for ten, and I've got three

children in Sweden. And I painted, when I was in Sweden. Then I started taking one group to Scotland fishing and then two and then five, then six and just slowly it's kind of snowballed. And. Yeah.

Alistair Brew [00:13:27] All my clients are from Scandinavia, Swedish. I don't have any advertising, any marketing, anything. It's all word of mouth. So. If Barrett wants to get a hold of me he's got to know Eunace that's been with me last year, and so on.

Alistair Brew [00:13:50] Well I can tell one about Paul and myself up at Merchison Falls.

James Thull [00:13:54] OK, great.

Alistair Brew [00:13:56] As we are in Uganda. This is way, way back when we first met. And there were no boats on the Nile. There was Koboko. That could never get above the water gauge. The water's too hard. And there was a boat called Myanmar. But the engines were always so bad they were never really working. It was difficult to get a booking. And there's a pool on the north bank called Cool Million. And it's where, in the old days, where people used to fish. And it's, was records of people catching big fish in the Cool Million. It was cut off by a big spate in 1962, 63. Which knocked the bridge off that spanned the River Nile, and created a new falls called Hutu Falls. Because up until that spate, there was no second falls. Everything went through the main split, the main gorge. And Paul and myself been looking at this and said "oh we've got to get there we've got to get there we've got to get there," and so eventually we had the boat and it was the two of us. And it's not the kind of thing for the fainthearted, you can't really take clients in this. So, and we said "blah. We'll, we'll go for it." So the two of us went, and we hacked our way through the bush, found some old hippo trails that wound up around the bank and over the top. And after a lot of hacking and scratches and ripped shirts we got to The Cool Million. And we'd talked about it so long we said "right, we've gotta cast at the same time." So we stood shoulder to shoulder, and Paul cast to his left, and I cast to my right, and we both hooked fish instantaneously. I, unfortunately, lost mine. And then helped Paul land it. And there's a very good photo of Paul holding a big clunky Kila Perch. From The Cool Million.

James Thull [00:15:56] Beautiful. The first cast too, and that, was that flies?

Alistair Brew [00:15:59] No, that was, that was with plugs.

Alistair Brew [00:16:07] Keep fishing. The more you fish, the more pressure there will be to keep pristine areas and keep the tradition of fishing. Teach your kids. Teach your grandchildren to fish. Because if they don't want to fish and want to do this the whole time, we're fucked.