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Bri Dostie [00:00:10] Good question. So I started fishing with my grandfather and my mother growing up in rural Maine. We have a lot of nice brook trout. And as a really young kid, I was super fascinated with the outdoors and this was an opportunity to see something really cool that you don't normally get to up close and personal. So it was more of a nature curiosity. So I first started spin casting with my grandfather in Oxford County and my mom, and I got my first brook trout doing that and absolutely loved it. Since then, and as I went through childhood and adolescence, I picked up fly fishing at about fifteen. And that's really been the predominant mode of nature recreation I would say moving forward. Well, I'd say as someone who's interested more broadly in the outdoors and exploring, it's a mode of recreation that's really kind of passive and observant. So in order to be a successful angler, you have to be paying attention to what's happening around you and what the fish are paying attention to. So for me, I liked birds, I liked trees and rocks and all kinds of things like that. It was a great way to explore those spaces and also interact with really interesting animals and always something that you can just continue learning and pushing yourself and challenging yourself. So you just keep coming back.

Bri Dostie [00:01:44] Well, I'd say there's from my perspective, there's been some changes just in terms of my proficiency. So I'm seeing different fish as my skill level increases. But in Maine, we've noticed hatches happening a little differently. We have very I mean, everywhere. Each watershed has very specific hatches and annual cycles, but there have been some changes in terms of when those are happening. And that certainly affects the way that you are fishing an area. I'd say we're also, in the state of Maine we do a lot of saltwater fishing and fishing in those environments, we are seeing species changes. We're seeing the water temperature and acidification really happened at a rapidly increasing pace. And that really changes the way that you're targeting species. But also how many of those species are around? Maine was a huge stronghold of Atlantic salmon. And now I think we have just over 700 returning as of the statistics this last year. We definitely have programs that are working towards improving that, but it's signifies a lot more of a big change just within the environment.

Bri Dostie [00:02:57] Yeah, well, they are doing well. We have had some changes in terms of glacial pond ecosystems. So, for example, in some of the ponds that I like fishing in northwest Maine, northwestern Maine used to have blueback char. And those species are you know, there's a I think three, maybe three ponds that have those that I've fished at. But mostly you're seeing lake trout or other introduced species taking over that predatory space. So one of my favorite rivers to fish, the Rapid River for example, used to be an area where you could find char. And now it's land-locked Atlantic Salmon, Lake trout in the larger lake systems around it and then still brookies. But it's certainly changing the population itself.

James Thull [00:03:43] Mm hmm.

Bri Dostie [00:03:44] Well, I would love to see protections for those wild spaces continue. I think for our state we have a very industrial history. A lot of these places that I access to be fishing are owned by paper companies, people who are usually utilizing those natural resources. And for me, as a native Mainer as well, I would love to see those kind of initiatives done in a respectful way that prioritizes conservation. There have been good examples of that and bad examples of that. So making sure that that is something that the state prioritizes at a greater level. The outdoor recreation industry is huge for us. I'd say it's replacing a niche where more industrial spaces used to be our primary economy. So

making sure that that exists for the future and that we can still be out there and interacting with these beautiful species for years to come.

Bri Dostie [00:04:36] Oh, man, so many reasons. Maine has a distinct history and culture, really a heritage in fly fishing. I would say personally for me as a female angler, I have idols like Flyrod Crosby and Carrie Gertrude Stevens to kind of look back on and be proud of as I perpetuate that practice in nature. These were people who created something special. You know, something that I really love and is even on my hat here is a certain fly called the Gray Ghost. It's one of the most effective streamer patterns in any angling situation and that was invented by a woman who fished the same rivers and lakes that I get to fish every day. And I still use that fly frequently with success. So being able to connect to something a little bit more rooted in the history of the state is is really special. Maine is also one of the very few places in the United States where you can catch massive native brook trout where they're supposed to be, and you can interact with healthy specimens themselves. I'm incredibly fortunate to be able to fish those as my home rivers. And I know it's for a lot of people that's a bucket list destination. And it really should be because they're incredible fish to interact with. They live in beautiful places. I'd say for people from away, it's a very different practice in fishing as well, especially when you think of 'River Runs Through It' kind of mentality of back casts and beautiful open spaces. There's a lot of rule casting really a deciduous forests and shrubs to work around. And I think that challenge is something that everyone should experience and kind of adapt to in order to be a proficient and flexible angler. I certainly am. My partner works very directly with the Gulf of Maine Research Institute, which is an organization that studies fisheries management, but also the Gulf of Maine, which is a huge, huge resource for us in terms of what it brings for the fisheries industry. And that base is warming faster than ninety nine percent of the oceans in the world and really is emblematic of what climate change will look like in more ocean settings. I'd say it's something that we need to be paying attention to, especially as our species change and as tidal levels change as well. Maine has huge tides and that's something that living on the ocean I need to be aware of just as a person, and where my home is. But as we look towards the future and the economy of the states, important to take those effects into account and really plan around it. For example, I know there's work being done working with lobsterman and knowing that's a huge, huge moneymaker for us as a state and as a population looking into aquaculture and other forms of fisheries that could kind of replace that over time. That's certainly something we need to be prioritizing.

Bri Dostie [00:07:38] Well, I think you need to be paying attention to the science around it and really be putting that into effect as policy is put into place. I also think that it is equally important to consider the cultural heritage pieces of fisheries access. In Maine, we have quite a few native populations that are still utilizing those bases and harvesting those species. And that needs to be respected ultimately, and that needs to be worked into any kind of protections that we have. I think there's so much that we can do with science in terms of the greater scheme of things. But the cultural heritage in itself is is overwhelmingly important.

Bri Dostie [00:08:19] So I have a few people who have been incredibly supportive and really facilitated that learning. My partner and husband at this time was one of them. We have been together for a very long time and he was the first person to introduce me to fly fishing with his father. So going out with them and having those kind of supportive figures as an entry way into the sport was hugely important and something that not everyone has. You know, it's equally true that I wasn't invited by my uncles to the annual fishing trip. I was lucky enough to find people who are able to share that passion in a very welcoming

and supportive way. I think in contemporary fly fishing in Maine, Evelyn King is an incredible inspiration. She started Maine Women Fly Fishers, which is one of the oldest and largest women's groups in the whole United States. It's part of the Suego Trout Unlimited chapter and she's doing more in facilitating a space for women and minority perspectives to come together and interact with the sport in a really intimate way, but also share that enthusiasm with each other and not necessarily need to rely on male perspectives as much.

Bri Dostie [00:09:31] Oh, I love fishing. Because it is one of the few things you can do and just totally let it take over your mind. You know, it's it's a complete flow state if you really get into it in that way. For me like I mentioned, I get to observe everything that's around me. I'm also a reflective thinker. So I need that space to kind of process what's going on anyway. But being able to do so and practice something and continue to improve on something and challenge myself. I'm just addicted to that process. So I really appreciate that.

Bri Dostie [00:10:10] Absolutely. I think the benefits of fly fishing and interacting in this space are just huge. And I would say the culture within fly fishing has been fairly restrictive in terms of who feels welcome in that space. So for me, I I feel it's incredibly important to open that up to more diverse perspectives, which is why I started my organization, Confluence Collective. The focus of that is really to bring more diverse perspectives to the riverbank and ensure that we have more welcoming environments. That sort of started after interacting with different fly shops. And, you know, as a female angler, you are you can be frequently asked if you're lost or where your husband is or if you're buying a present rather than taken seriously, regardless of your skill level. That shouldn't be an interaction that's frequent. So being able to kind of change the way we make assumptions and have perceptions in our minds about what fly fishing is and ensure that it's going to be a more inclusive and welcoming space overall.

Bri Dostie [00:11:11] Sure. So I started this organization and working really closely with Evelyn King whom I mentioned. The idea came from a an opportunity I had to travel out west and do some fishing through Wyoming and Montana. And after walking into multiple fly shops and having that very scenario play out over and over again, I came back and kind of debriefed and Evelyn was like, 'We should be able to go these places and interact with the sport in a way that, you know, you don't have to be a stubborn person like I am to get out there.' And also, they're just incredible places. You know, everybody's heard about fishing in Montana. And for me personally, I'd always sought out through different social media outlets or different community groups to figure out where I could be going or maybe find a fishing buddy. That's definitely, like safety is definitely an issue that you want to consider there. And then looking at this kind of cultural phenomenon of women's groups that it's taking place across the country. The idea to connect those through shared fishing experiences came up. So Evelyn put me in touch with a woman, Sandy Erickson out here who helped start the Montana Flygals, and we bounced the idea around of doing an exchange. So having Mainers go out to Montana, Montanans come to Maine and welcome more women specifically in this case to the experience and extend that network beyond what's very local community. So we just finished the first exchange that happened this past week. We had eleven women from the northeast come and fish along Montanans who are new or seasoned in the sport on both sides and really do that in a way that was fun, engaging. You know, it really prioritized the community aspect of it as much as we did on the water experiences. And I would say we walked away from that with just overwhelming support. And it was humbling to see the emotional responses to what we what we did. I mean, if you look at it and you look at it just as a schedule, we went fishing a bunch of

places and we talked to people. But if you talk to any of the women who participated, it was a lot more than that. And they're already stoked to welcome people back to Maine or, you know, explore other places in a similar fashion. So super excited. See where that goes.

Bri Dostie [00:13:35] Oh, a favorite one. It's all great. Yeah. You know, there's something that I focus on and in in my previous work that had a lot to do with intercultural understanding and meaning making, I've recognized that at least personally, and I think in human nature, we kind of remember the ones that we miss. You know, in Chile, for example, I had a incredible opportunity to live there amongst host families. And in the end, fish some of these epic waterways that even, you know, fish from this (unintelligible) lake population of landlocked salmon were transplanted. So ultimately fishing this same species in a very different place. But I had a great opportunity to go fishing with my now husband. And we were on a river that was very similar to those in Maine in terms of the characteristics and the type and the style that we were doing. And it was another one of those experiences where you think you hit bottom or you got a log or something, and it was a massive brown trout and you could see the fish, didn't bring it in. And so, you know, that's something that we just continue to think about. But I think more recently, I've been really cherishing the smaller fish interactions. So the the juvenile species, especially the native species, kind of sitting in those moments with them and, you know, seeing them swim away. And the promise of what they'll become. That's been really rewarding to kind of meditate on. So I've. Yeah. This is a it will be one of my proudest accomplishments for sure. Just knowing that I'm going to be joining the historic ranks of women in the Maine outdoors. So I'm in the process. I definitely need to be in the state to sit for my test. But that's something that I will be doing definitely so that I can share really what I love about the state and bring other people out and explore.

Bri Dostie [00:15:35] Absolutely. Always so more than a destination. I would say I'm really curious about seeing different, unique species. So on a recent trip to Alaska, I was targeting Dolly Varden and different char- species. Brook trout's a char- and they're a favorite. So being able to explore that a little bit further, I didn't catch one while I was there. So that's something that I'll keep going back to. But ultimately, it would just be wonderful to see, you know, those intricate details that are so different in each watershed. The cutthroat is an example of that. You just see this species modification to a unique watershed that, you know, it's right in front of you. It's pretty incredible to reflect on what that represents, in a larger scale.

Bri Dostie [00:16:24] Yes, I would say to challenge what the stereotypical fly fisher in your head is that you can, that you can conjure in your mind and really explore to see if that's a space that you want to be and let me know because I'll help you get out there.