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Jen Brown [00:00:10] Yeah, you know I knew you were going to ask this question and I struggled with that, of what story to tell you. Cause anglers have a lot of stories, some more true than others. But I thought I'd tell you about my first Salmon Fly hatch on the Big Hole. And this is when I was in college in Dillon, at the University of Montana Western and I took a summer class. It was a community ethnography class where we really just had to show up one day and then conduct field research for the rest of the class. Well, it just so happens I had been fly fishing a couple months by then, and so I skip the class to hit the Salmon Fly hatch on the Big Hole and it was just a great day of Salmon Flies on the Big Hole is one of those very kind- mythologized events of... the water starts dropping off of the runoff, the salmon flies start migrating to the banks and then start hatching, but there's so many of them that if you hit it on the right years it's like a blizzard. It's like it's snowing, there are so many giant bugs in there and that just happened to be one of those days. And the fish were eating, there were bugs everywhere, it was absolutely beautiful. That was really- I'd been fishing a couple months by then, fly fishing, so I could cast, I could catch the fish and that was really, I think, my first real introduction to Western fly fishing. But just being out there and being part of it was one of the things of what angling means to me, it's like connecting to the natural world and there's just those great moments, magical moments, out in nature that are fun. And, of course, the fish too are part of it but it was a great day and I did end up finishing the project. I did an ethnography of fly fishing guides and got an A on it, but I don't think the professor was that impressed that I skipped class to go fishing.

Jen Brown [00:02:16] You know I started out, grew up spin fishing mostly. All over, my dad would take us to trips up in Canada and Saskatchewan for Northern Pike and then all over in Montana and just growing up as well, camping, that sort of thing. And then when I got to college I learned how to fly fish and that really hooked me, I enjoy fly fishing and I enjoy trout fishing particularly.

Jen Brown [00:02:46] Yeah, definitely. I mean, I think the thing about fly fishing, what I like the most, is that you learn a lot about rivers and about insects and about fish. You know you need to know the seasons and the water condition. And you should be able to at least recognize some insects. What are they? What fly patterns can you tie to imitate those insects? Um, what, what patterns work at certain times or other times in the season? And that kind of mystery and figuring it all out, I think that's one of my my favorite parts of fly fishing because you really just get to know rivers well, especially if you're fishing them all the time.

Jen Brown [00:03:34] Yeah, I suppose, you know, there are some standards that you just use around here in southwestern Montana and, elk-hair caddis like we had talked about the other day and um... a good like, bead-head nymph or a pheasant tail or a prince nymph, something like that. Streamers, woolly buggers as well as, if you could tie some good imitations of say, stoneflies, salmonflies, grasshoppers that work well that aren't necessarily an imitation, but an attractor dry fly. Some of those bigger ones are great.

Jen Brown [00:04:18] Yeah, I guess there are a lot out there. I can't think of any off the top of my head, but I kind of learned in the tradition of... I learned to fly fish on the Beaverhead and Big Hole so I can tie really tiny nymphs, and giant streamers, and big dry flies but I'm not the best at say, tying small, tiny, seedy, you know size 18 dry flies or anything like that. And I learned in the tradition of more recent-- like foam, synthetic

materials, rubber legs. Some of the more, I guess the traditional fly fishers might see them as kind of ridiculous patterns but they work well.

Jen Brown [00:05:07] Sure. Well the book is really the history of trout and fishing in the West from about the 1860s to the 1970s. And it looks at how trout got to the West, in the context of railroads, industrialization, and westward expansion. So it's really um- the beginning of the book is creating place of how are all of these ideas of trout from Eastern Brook Trout in America, to British fly fishers, how is that shaping sportsmen as they're moving west? And they're bringing a lot of trout out with them. So what I'm really trying to do is, documenting the environmental change and the social and historical context of that change. And then the second half of the book is really the consequence of place. So we're- by the 1920s, 1950s Montana, the Rocky Mountains, they're known for trout fishing in these pristine places. And the other part of the book is just, what are the consequences of that for native fish and for other people using the river and for the rivers themselves?

Jen Brown [00:06:26] Well, a tremendous impact and there's, pretty much in the inland West, there are no places you can go where you're just fishing an untouched pristine fishery. And that's really the thing about my book Trout Culture, is that we think of the West and fly fishing in these very grandiose terms of how how great it is in these pristine environments, but in reality, those fisheries were made possible by extensive manipulation of the environment by humans and centuries of action, really. So that- I forgot your original question...

James Thull [00:07:07] Just kind of the effect of those non-natives on the native trout and rivers.

Jen Brown [00:07:11] And you know, for Rainbows the biggest problem gonna be the hybridization with Cutthroat Trout and um- Cutthroat Trout, in most parts of the West, aren't doing that well. There are certain species that are extinct, endangered, threatened, of special concern, and there are only parts of the West that have kind of held out. That are more on the kind of Cutthroat Trout fisheries rather than Brook, Rainbow, Brown Trout. And certainly Brook Trout and Brown Trout and spreading and competing with other species has been a problem as well.

Jen Brown [00:07:56] Well that's one of the points that I try to make in my book, is that we're so obsessed with trout-- which are beautiful, charismatic fish, they're really fun to fish for... and people have thought that for centuries--that when we've created this place for trout, we've really ignored other non-game species. I mean just the idea that one fish is designated as a game fish, and one fish is designated as a non-game fish has a tremendous impact on how those species are treated. And they're defined by these very silly human constructions of 'oh they're pretty and they taste well and they fight well' and all of those things that define sport. But what that means for those non-game fish is that they're not protected and they're kind of maligned by anglers, fisheries managers often ignore them. So we have this point in the... kind of history of the West, in which species like Mountain Whitefish whose probably one of the most abundant species in the West, or suckers or stuff... Scientists really don't know a lot about them. And when those fish start to decline, like what had happened recently on the Madison River, they didn't even notice the decline right away because they're so obsessed with managing for all of these Brown Trout and Rainbow Trout that tourists are coming to visit, so. Um, what happens to these native species is they don't have any proponents; anglers are big, have been, historically played this large role in conservation, but only for certain species and then for the other species they've kind of been left behind in management plans and among anglers and that

sort of thing, so. The interesting thing about that is, because they've been ignored, they're genetically pure populations. Whereas, Brown Trout, even Cutthroat Trout, Brook Trout any of these species that you find in the West, they've been so manipulated through a century of hatcheries and stocking, that there are really very, very few kind of genetically pure populations of trout species in the West. But for, say, Mountain Whitefish there is just the silver lining is that they're all there, there's quite a bit of biodiversity, we just don't know too much about them.

Jen Brown [00:10:39] Yeah, it certainly varies by region. In the West a lot of how states who manage fish and rivers, how they started defining game fish had to do with Eastern-American and European ideals of sport. Stemming from, oh, all the way back to say, Isaac Walton or any of the 19th century writers, and all those ideas of trout and salmon as a game fish influenced the growth of Western management. And so, trout become defined as this game fish but there are very few non-trout species that are under that terminology and that idea. But really it has to do with the kind of social and cultural ideas of species.

Jen Brown [00:11:38] Oh an extremely important role. National Parks really, especially Yellowstone National Park, played a big role in being some of the first management entities to manage for Cutthroat Trout. And that goes back to the Organic Act and the idea that they are managing, um, kind of as an ecosystem. And a central part of those ecosystem are those original species in it. So you have National Parks throughout the West, you have these backcountry wilderness areas and these headwaters who- that are now really the last holdouts for native species. And we're in this really interesting time in which the history is starting to catch up to us. You had 150 years of trout stocking, hatcheries, put-and-take stocking in many places, besides Montana, after 1975. Um, and this entire tourism and recreation industry that's based upon Rainbow Trout, Brown Trout. Um, and more recently though, you have more anglers concerned with native fish. And more people who want to see native fish. There is a certain aesthetic of having this fish that's been here for millions of years, versus having a fish that was introduced by European settlers. But the two, in terms of management or even fishing, don't necessarily- aren't necessarily compatible. So I think we've- we're reaching a moment where it's time for anglers and fisheries managers to address these issues of non-native versus native species. And I think they can coexist. I think that there just has to be a better way of doing it. And a better way of, not only protecting native trout in National Parks, but also protecting all of those other native non-game species.

Jen Brown [00:13:53] Well, certainly there's been a lot in those countries about the impacts on native species. Because trout naturally don't exist below the what, the fortieth parallel? Something like that, so anywhere where you had settler societies, where you had people moving out of Europe, and you had trout following the lines of colonialism and empire. But a lot of the scientific research has dealt with the effects on native species. To the extent where those places are addressing the invasive trout, it really depends on the country and the context though.

Jen Brown [00:14:44] Well, certainly climate change is the biggest threat to cold water, freshwater fish. And climate change, connected to all the other human impacts on the environment: pollution, de-watering through irrigation, the kind of growth of the suburbs of- like here in Bozeman, especially, the expansion out into the rest of the Gallatin Valley. You have a lot of pressures on the water. And what's needed for trout to survive because trout are fickle, right? They start dying if the water starts reaching a certain temperature, and they need a certain flow, and they need a certain kind of habitat and that sort of thing. So there are a lot of human pressures being placed on the fish. And certainly there are

natural issues that will impact fish and trout populations. But some of those are really precipitated too, by low water years, and drought years. So on the Yellowstone, the de-watering of the Yellowstone last year that really led to the outbreak of the PKD and whirling disease that- the outbreaks in the 80s and 90s, that corresponded with drought years and so there are, there are certainly natural impacts... But a lot of- a lot of it is made worse by human, human impacts. And what, what I think is especially worrying is that anglers have, for centuries, been at the head of the conservation movement. They've kind of spearheaded conservation and environmental protection, but our focus in that regards I think is a little bit narrow of just focusing on fish in rivers and all of these blue ribbon trout streams but forgetting about consumption, forgetting to address the other issues of climate change and anywhere from national, international legislation, to public transportation, to kind of regional solutions is that um, I think that to address all of these issues facing trout we need to think broader in terms of conservation.

Jen Brown [00:17:18] I don't know, that's a hard question. Certainly that makes a good argument. The kind of economic importance of recreation can be used, and it's not just for guides and outfitters, but for the larger community. The problem with that, I think, is that it shouldn't necessarily just be an economic argument. I mean perhaps we're in that historical time period where it needs to be done, right. There needs to be some sort of, uh, connection to the people who only care about the bottom line. But I think the focus on conservation and environmental solutions as kind of part of neo-liberalism, as part of the market above everything and making environmental solutions that are friendly to the market and friendly to economics, I think there's something lost there. I think that we should protect the environment, not just because it's good for the bottom line, not because, just because, it is beneficial to communities economically but beneficial to communities for, just sustainability in general, because protecting trout means protecting the rivers and protecting the water which is the very basis of life itself.

Jen Brown [00:18:55] Yeah, I think it is important to branch out to, to make fishing and angling broader. And, yeah, there are certainly a lot of people concerned with kids who aren't spending time in nature, and there are a lot of people concerned about the relevance of trout fishing in the West, as it's seen as this very... Elitist sport in many ways. And certainly that's true for people who are dropping six hundred and fifty dollars a day on a guide trip but for a lot of people in the West it's just something you do. I would like to see more diversity within the sport and I think that's changing. I think it's definitely, since the 1970s, you see more women in the sport, you see more people likely to take it up. So, do I have any solutions for that? I'm not sure, but I do like seeing when they have the kid's days on the Big Hole rivers and the uh, the ways that the Trout Unlimited and the other groups are trying to reach out to kids, and to different groups. So I think that there are definitely more kid's fishing ponds than there used to be, in ways that conservation organizations have been trying to address that and I hope they continue those efforts in the future.

Jen Brown [00:20:27] You know I, I think I would recommend a few books. Because I like reading, and I like enjoying fishing books, but also I would just tell them to get out there. That's the best way to learn, is just to be on the river and notice what the fish are doing, and what the insects are doing, and how you cast in the wind. And then just to practice. Practicing casting in your backyard, practice tying flies and ask for help. Try to join groups and organizations that promote fishing, and that's really the best way to learn is to practice, to meet other people and it's a fun time to, to learn about fishing.

Jen Brown [00:21:19] That's a hard one, I have a lot. I think probably my favorite would be Roderick Haig-Brown. I just love his descriptions, and his observations of nature and fishing. I think other angling authors, I'm a big fan of John Gierach, a big fan of, oh just a lot of people. Gary La Fontaine, I love his crazy experiments, scuba diving type aspects of the sport, where he's really trying to understand why things work and that makes him a great fisherman. Did make him a great fisherman. Um, Norman Maclean, obviously, has the Montana connection, but, um. Yeah. There are too many to name from, but I really enjoy fishing and reading about fishing in print as- just as much as going outside.

Jen Brown [00:22:23] Oh, well it's just a great collection. And it has a tremendous amount of value to researchers, being all housed in one spot and then also being in Bozeman. So we have the added bonus of maybe go fish the Gallatin in the evenings after you research [laughs], but really the, the trout and salmonid, you'd think it would be a narrow audience, but getting into some of those books they embrace a lot of fields. Anywhere from art and literature, to biology, and fisheries management. And the other thing about your collection is that it has quite a broad, worldly influence so it's not just helpful for scholars in the United States, but I think it could draw in people from around the world, and the size and scope of the collection is quite impressive and I've used it. I used it for my book, Trout Culture and I think it has tremendous value.

Jen Brown [00:23:32] Oh, I think it's extremely important for anglers to be involved in politics, to join conservation organizations, and to understand what is going on. Because there are a lot of different laws, management programs that will influence rivers, and influence fishing. And extremely important to get involved and stay involved in politics. And I think that has to do with not only kind of protecting the environment, protecting habitats, but also protecting access. There is this major threat to public lands currently, and part of that is also just a threat to access. And if anglers, if everyday people cannot fish, cannot access trout streams, and cannot enjoy the natural resources that we have in the West, they're not going to fish. Or they're less likely to fish. And so what that does is, that it would create this... I guess let me back up um. The strength of, kind of, trout conservation is its grassroots character. So. Important to protect that conservation ideals, is to make sure that people get out there and have access to fisheries and that I think also goes back to your question of how do we get younger people, and how do we get women, and other folks involved in the sport? Making it accessible for them, making opportunities to fish close to town, making opportunities where they can go on a blue ribbon trout stream and catch fish. But a lot of that has to deal with the availability of opportunity. So, going back to your question then, being politically involved, being involved in conservation organizations and reading up on these issues is key to protecting what we have.

Jen Brown [00:25:42] The Montana stream access law is very unique, is very progressive, and it really came out of the 1970s. And what was going on in the West in the 1970s is you had, I guess the rise of the new West, the rise of the inland West, the interior West, as seen as a place for play. And you had the rise of outdoor recreation. From skiing, to fly fishing, and you also had the growth of people moving into the interior West, to places like Montana. Very wealthy people who were able to afford to buy these large massive ranches, and what they started doing was realizing they'd just bought this 5,000 acre ranch in Montana, they didn't want people on the rivers. At the same time in Montana, in 1972, Montanans passed this very progressive 1972 Montana Constitution. And some of the aspects of that constitution were that 1: It gave Montanans the right to a clean and healthy environment. And you can see that came straight out of the Environmental Movement, which connected human health to environmental health. So that right to the clean healthy environment, and then there was another section that gave Montanans the

right to public water was their right. Public access was their right. And access really wasn't a major issue until people started coming in and trying to buy ranches, and then you had these ranchers who customarily had just allowed anglers, allowed guides on their lands, that started closing off access. So what would usually be just a trail to the river, was now a 'no trespassing' sign. And you started seeing this more and more in places like the Beaverhead River, the Dearborn River, off of the Missouri. And to the point by, the early '80s, the anglers started to notice it, and they would be- there was a famous case in- along the Beaverhead River, where you had the growth of fly fishing and guiding and just recreationalists as on the river, but you had this one landowner who, notoriously, would harass guides and outfitters, and would harass just people floating down the river. He, apparently, he used to allow people to float through and he didn't care, but he was given this very lucrative offer for his land as long as he could get people to not float through on the Beaverhead River. Well the Beaverhead River, according to the Montana Constitution, was for the benefit of Montana citizens. The water in general. And then you had another case on The Dearborn, where a rancher was also trying to cut off access and harassing rafters and that sort of thing. And it got pretty messy, at times, in the '80s, of barbed wire or obstructions being put across fences, and some pretty scary confrontations involving guns and nothing actually ever happened. No one was ever shot, but you had just- and it was just certain few landowners, who were really making a mess of things. And what that did was it galvanized these anglers and conservationists, and started in Butte. And of course this started in Butte. One that- Butte has this reputation of being this kind of rough and tumble town but they- it's a very working class, it's a very democratic place. And these anglers, they would go off, and it's Butte so they would go to places like the Big Hole and the Beaverhead. Very few, you know, that working class culture, of hunters and fishers and anglers and they were always spending time outside. Well, they started to notice these problems and a couple Butte anglers, Tom Bungi and Jerry Manley, they started the Montana coalition for stream access. And later, other anglers would get involved in Butte and Dillon and elsewhere. They hired an attorney and then they pushed a couple of cases that eventually would go to the Montana Supreme Court in the mid '80s. And what came out of that, is that those cases ruled that the recreationalists on the river had the right to access the river within the high water mark. And then the next year, in the Montana Legislature they codified that with the Montana Stream Access Law. And this has been a law that is way ahead of other states. Compared to say, Utah or Wyoming or Colorado, that Montana anglers and also tourists, they have quite a bit of access to rivers. You can access rivers with county bridges, county roads, various other access points, and as long as you stay within the high watermarks along the banks, that you have the right to fish and be in the river. So that was one of the greatest things to come out of the '80s in this kind of grassroots movement, was Montanans protecting the right of access. And, of course, in the '90s and 2000s you had even more wealthy landowners trying to cut off access, so there are- there has always been threats to that law, but I think it is one of those points that Montanans can be proud of, of protecting that access and ensuring that their kids and their grandkids can fish the same rivers that they did.

Jen Brown [00:31:55] Yeah, I think that's a good question. So it was certainly the grassroots character of it all. And there's certainly the kind of hard work of a lot of individuals in Butte, and elsewhere in Montana, as well as kind of the legal aspect of making sure it was based upon the Montana Constitution. So it was good timing that way. But also I think that a lot of the groups that were involved and joined the Montana coalition for stream access, a lot of the conservation groups, they were okay with protecting access. I think today, a lot of the larger conservation and environmental organizations, they don't want to deal with access. They don't want to deal with controversial topics like climate change. They do not want to protect access because they don't want to anger their, like,

millionaire donors in any way. So, yeah, it might not have, it might not be possible today. The other aspect is that all of these guys in the '80s were pretty young, but I don't think there's that grassroots strength of young fly fishers getting involved in conservation like there was in the '70s and '80s in Montana, and that's maybe another aspect of why it was so successful then.

Jen Brown [00:33:23] Oh yeah, definitely. I mean, the Montanan anglers have really, just view it as their river. And it's not the ranchers or the people, the mining companies, or whoever owns the land next to the rivers, it's kind of their river. So there's definitely- what the law did was that it codified that democratic view of rivers and fishing in many ways.

Jen Brown [00:33:59] I would go anywhere. I would fish for anything, to be honest, if I had the opportunity.

James Thull [00:34:04] So if I said you had a pick?

Jen Brown [00:34:05] If I had to pick? Well I guess the first place I'd like to go, maybe, is New Zealand. But I would love to kind of fish around the world, and not just for trout but do more saltwater fishing. I'd like to catch Tarpon and Permit on a fly rod and go from there.

Jen Brown [00:34:32] Oh yeah, I mean, there's something really satisfying of tying a fly that is made from, you know, some road kill animal that you had picked up earlier [laughs] in the day and scavenged, and tying those feathers or fur around the hook, and being able to go out and throw it in the river and catch a fish. Which is much more satisfying than say, oh you bought this lure from a store that- and it was manufactured in China or Southeast Asia, or that sort of thing. So I think there's that aspect of, it makes it more personal when you catch a fish. And much more satisfying of, 'oh that's an accomplishment that I did.'

James Thull [00:35:20] And I have a follow up question then. So, have you actually scavenged roadkill for fly tying material?

Jen Brown [00:35:26] Most fly fishers do.

James Thull [00:35:29] Really? That was something- a cultural aspect I was unaware of.

Jen Brown [00:35:31] Yeah, if you ever see a pheasant you should just grab it for me.

James Thull [00:35:34] Ok, so other things? Are you looking for a skunk or a beaver, or a goat, or?

Jen Brown [00:35:38] Oh no, no skunks if I yeah... pheasant's always a good one.

James Thull [00:35:43] All right and I guess they do a varie-.

Jen Brown [00:35:46] Did you say goat?

James Thull [00:35:47] Yeah, I don't know. [laughs] I guess I've never actually seen roadkill goat come to think of it, but uh... Ok. So, pheasants are definitely high on the list?

Jen Brown [00:35:57] Yeah.

James Thull [00:36:05] Alright.

Jen Brown [00:36:05] Compared to elsewhere? Um. I just- the mountains, the rivers. You have these really amazing landscapes and the rivers, if you're floating down the Big Hole or the Yellowstone these, these large, freestone rivers and they're just beautiful. So I think definitely the scenery has matched the fishing in many ways, so you have these beautiful trout as well, and they're large and as long as we continue to be vigilant and protect them, I think that Montana fishing will stay great.