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Jay Buchner [00:00:10] A long term family type thing. My, all my family's been involved in fishing. I grew up in eastern Iowa, not a hotbed of fly fishing, when I was a kid. But my mother's father, my grandfather, was a dentist, very involved and interested in fly fishing with all his, with his friends. I started tying flies when I was eight in his basement, up in Michigan. And, uh....Tried to learn to fly cast at a young age like that with old bamboo rods, which were a bit heavy for me, at that, that, stage and it's, it's progressed into a, to a lifelong pursuit as a result of. And... My other grandfather was a serious fisherman who was also, did some fly fishing but not very much. More interested in spin fishing, but warm water, warm water, species, a lot in the Midwest. And cool water species in Canada. Northern Pike, Walleye, and Small Mouth Bass were some of his prime directives.

Jay Buchner [00:01:43] Oh, well, my grandfather lived and had his dental practice in Paw Paw, Michigan, which is down near, Kalamazoo. Kind of the south and west. They had fishing property on Little Manistee and a summer cabin. He and all his fishing friends had property up there and had their own cabin to go up and fish. Another, one of the other, he'd sold that one when I was young, he had another cabin on a little creek called Cannon Creek. Was almost nonexistent, little village of Sharon. You can find it on a map, but I don't think there's much of anything there.

Jay Buchner [00:02:32] Teaching people. You know, I've never been a teacher as such. There are some people in this business who used to be teachers. Mike Lawson, is an example. He used to be a teacher before he got involved in the sort of a lot of people in this, in the fly fishing business have had other careers. Some they use, they had fly-fishing as as a part time hobby while they did their other careers. Sometimes, they've eliminated the other career for fly-fishing. So there's, there's quite a quite wide range of that. I got involved from a guiding business standpoint with my, with fly-fishing, after I moved to Jackson. I ended up in Jackson from Iowa when I was in school. I was on the three-school ,five-year education program. And went from one school that was too big for, for me coming from a school and I only had a hundred in my graduating class, to a school that was actually too small, to following a, pursuing a summer job, with Wild Kingdom TV productions, ended up with the University of Wyoming. There, I ran into other folks who, uh, one fella who had his grandfather, homesteaded in Jackson as a young man, came up to Jackson in the summertime to work summer jobs, for some income during, during, between school. And ended up staying.

James Thull [00:04:17] Wonderful.

Jay Buchner [00:04:18] Getting involved in the fishing industry. I started out with another fella, who has now, eventually, moved to Montana, and passed away a few years ago. To having my own shop, guiding. For a...a long time.

James Thull [00:04:41] That's great.

Jay Buchner [00:04:41] When I first started in doing guiding, it was, uh... Never, you never guided people using- I never do in any way - bait that were live bait, or anything like that. The spinning, spinning, spin fisherman, which was in the late '60s, early '70s, was a little more common, in those. Now it's, fly-fishing has grown enough, so that don't get very many requests for spin fishermen, I dont think anyway. To go on guiding trips with spinning gear. Not in our area, anyway.

Jay Buchner [00:05:33] [laughs] That's almost funny. Because. There's a distinct difference. And uh, men, have this, have this block some place in their head, it's a testosterone plug, and it disallows them from being able to listen. [laughs] Women don't have that problem. They listen to what you're telling them, and they usually put it into practice much, much more readily. One of the common things that I've run into over the years was, some husband with his wife. And the husband would say, "oh I've been doing this for a couple of years. I'm fine, don't worry about me. Help my wife." By noon, I could have the wife casting better and catching more fish than the husband. Who had, for whatever reason, decided that he knew everything that needed to be known. And they don't want to understand the fact that this is a sport you'll never learn everything about. Doesn't matter if you live to be 200 years old, it's totally impossible. So, yeah, there's no question, women are much easier to, and I'd much rather teach women.

James Thull [00:06:46] That's great.

Jay Buchner [00:06:49] One of the interesting things of that is, I find that there's a lot of women's only clinics that are now popping up. One of the one of the clubs in in Wyoming, in Cheyenne, Wyoming, has a very, very well attended women's clinic every year. But women, in many cases, would rather be taught by a woman, and they feel intimidated, if they have to be taught by a man. So, certain women don't fit very well into that scenario. Even though, they'll probably be a good listeners. They seem to be intimidated by men trying to teach them, you know, it's kind of, maybe it's kind of like, you know, husbands trying to teach their wives to drive. Which has never been portrayed as a successful, successful enterprise. I don't, I really don't, can't tell you what it is, but I've run into that.

James Thull [00:07:43] Hm.

Jay Buchner [00:07:43] Where. So, the, this club in Cheyenne has been been able to get enough women who have had some experience to help teach the women. And some women are not intimidated by men instructors. And that works out fine.

Jay Buchner [00:08:07] It's impossible. Yeah. Now, it doesn't matter, if I go out on a day of fishing and I don't learn something, I've not had a very good day. I don't care about the fishing part. You know, whether I caught fish or didn't catch fish, whether they were big or little. It's, if I didn't learn something, I've not had a complete fishing day. Cause there's an unending amount of stuff in fly fishing. Which is why, you know, one of the things that I gravitated to fly fishing from, I used to do spin fishing when I was a kid as well. I finally just kind of felt like I pretty much had most everything that I could master, mastered. Fly fishing was a place where I can learn something every day.

Jay Buchner [00:09:00] Well, we're seeing a big increase in women, as it is, you know, on a, on a yearly basis. They are still a minority in that regard, but more and more and more women and it's, it's self-generating. When I was at the show two weeks ago down in Utah, there was a booth in there, a commercial booth, department, which was Women's Fly-Fishing Club. And there were two women's-pretty much, women's only- fly-fishing clubs down in Utah. That numbered, I think they said one of them was 20, 20 ladies. One was 20, more than 20. There was a gal that was kind of heading it up was from Spokane, Washington. She said they had 60 women in a fly, a fly-fishing club. And I wasn't aware that that particular aspect was being, you know, that was happening. I didn't. I thought it was quite interesting. Now they're, now they're growing into women's only clubs. 'Oh, wow, that's neat.' And it really was. There were some very energetic young ladies in their 30s and maybe even a little younger. You know, that kind of, that age. But again, a lot of, a lot,

a lot of women are- It's, it's snowball- starting to kind of, rolling a snowball down the hill a little bit. And you see an awful lot more women than we used to.

James Thull [00:10:37] That's great.

Jay Buchner [00:10:37] And they're actually very, getting very good. And I know there's at least one women's, kind of women's only, club in Colorado as well.

James Thull [00:10:47] There is. I've interviewed some people from Colorado, women fly fishers.

Jay Buchner [00:10:51] I know some of the ladies involved with that. Quite good anglers.

James Thull [00:10:56] Yeah.

Jay Buchner [00:10:56] Quite good anglers. And they go out and have a good time. In this most recent fly-fishing film tour. That was just shown here in Idaho Falls last night. We saw it in Jackson several weeks ago, but. One of their women's only, their women's only trip with three ladies who are getting together to go celebrate their 40th birthdays, and go fishing. That was kind of fun.

James Thull [00:11:23] Yeah, that's great.

Jay Buchner [00:11:23] A neat segment.

Jay Buchner [00:11:30] I think, I think the term they use is "refuge." But, oh, tremendously important. You know, and that hasn't necessarily always been the case with, with, even with the National Parks. Or other associated, you know, federal lands. With the introduction of non-native fish such as Rainbows and Brown Trout. And the like. Yellowstone could be a good example of that.

James Thull [00:12:02] Mhm.

Jay Buchner [00:12:02] Where they do have a native species that, in the Yellowstone Cutthroat, that they're paying very close attention to. But in the 1880s they weren't paying attention to the native, native, natives, to the Madison River, which could be a West Slope Cutthroat, and Montana Grayling that was a river dwelling Grayling, not a lake Grayling. And they kind of, by planting non-native fish in that stream, they wiped those, both of those out. To a point where it's not recoverable. They aren't going to make that one, repair that, that particular one. But their attention to Yellowstone Cutthroats is very important. Because it is, if you, if you look at Yellowstone Cutthroats in Montana or other places in Wyoming where Yellowstone Cutthroats are found, they actually, because of a variety of problems, inhabit a relatively small part of their historic range. Maybe as little as 5% in some cases, of their historic range. Yellowstone Park, with their Yellowstone Cutthroat, is a refuge for for that species. To hopefully never, never having that, never go away for, you know, sustain in perpetuity. We have no idea how well some of our changing climate is going to affect that, all that. But maybe figure that one out some, some other day.

James Thull [00:13:37] Yeah.

Jay Buchner [00:13:37] Some other year. But yeah, the National Parks are immensely important for maintaining native species. As well as, Forest Service, federal lands. And, in

some cases, it's difficult to do that because of the introduction of non-native fish, at some point in the past. And, you know, I'm I'm not trying to and will not ever try putting blame on anybody, because when they were doing that, it seemed like a good idea. They had no idea of the consequences of their actions. You know, they were, they started planning non-native fish in the 1880s. They didn't know what the end result would be. They weren't intending, I don't think, to wipe out West Slope Cutthroats or Grayling. They just, were doing something without without enough background. That wasn't available for almost 100 years to figure it out.

James Thull [00:14:40] Yeah.

Jay Buchner [00:14:40] So, you know, and that's, and that's been done in tremendous number of places.

James Thull [00:14:45] Sure.

Jay Buchner [00:14:46] I caught a Western Cutthroat that was officially list, listed as extinct maybe what? Five years ago, from Oregon. Existed in three small streams, named the Alvord Cutthroat. And because of non-native Rainbow Trout, there's still Cutthroat-looking things there, but they're all hybridized. There's no pure native Alvord Cutthroats anymore. They're gone.

James Thull [00:15:13] Yeah.

Jay Buchner [00:15:14] And that one can't be replaced, can't be corrected either.

Jay Buchner [00:15:23] You know, it's, it's, it's, it's more of a recent kind of buzzword, if you will. You know, I'd have to give my hat, like take my hat off to the Wyoming Game and Fish Department, they actually realized some of the, the value of some of the wil- the native fish, in the state of Wyoming before some of our surrounding states, which is pretty good. They usually aren't the leaders on some of, some of, some things, like that. But Wyoming did realize, we have four different, four distinct cutthroats in the state of Wyoming that all relate to four distinct drainages within the United States. Three of, three of them are in headwater streams with three of the major river systems in North America. Yellowstone Cutthroat, with, which tributaries into the Missouri and Mississippi. Colorado River Cutthroat which obviously that's in our headwater. Green River streams, which tributary into the Colorado River, Snake River Cutthroat that is to the headwaters of the Columbia River system in the Snake. So. There's three trout in the headwaters of those those major river systems. That's pretty important. Catching. I don't work with a list. I have a friend who who's into catching different species of all kinds of fish, doesn't have to just be salmonids, who is making quite, you know, adding quite a few to his, to his list of, of species that he has caught. But I enjoy catching native trout in there, where they belong, if you will, without catching, even catching wild. But, fish are fish. It'ss very important to be able to catch them in in their native places. But, my wife had a good experience a few years ago. She was working with Trout Unlimited, a national convention in Kentucky. She was able to go into some small streams in the, in the Smoky Mountains and catch native Brook Trout in the streams where they belong. And she thought that was really neat. Which it is. I haven't gotten to do that.

Jay Buchner [00:17:52] Well...

James Thull [00:17:53] Not so much? OK.

Jay Buchner [00:17:55] Not really. State of Wyoming was the first state to introduce a, a "Cut Slam:" catching all four of the, all four of the cutthroats that we have. And the whole point of it was to teach people something about our native cutthroats and where they'd be found. And we've had people come to do the Cut Slam. And I've given away, Cut Slam trips to both youth, youth anglers and fundraisers for some of the Trout Unlimited chapters around the country. But the, yeah, it's kind of a, kind of a funny little, little deal with people. You know, they've for years, and years, and years considered cutthroats, to be cutthroats, to be cutthroats. And was, even though there's a great deal of difference between them. Both in their spotting, coloration, and behavior. People have, for years just, 'cutthroat's a cutthroat.' And we're only seeing, I think in recent years, people taking an interest in in Colorado River Cutthroat versus Bonneville Cutthroat versus Yellowstone Cutthroat or Snake River Cutthroat. So, yeah, it's, I don't think it's ever been a highlight of anglers coming to our area. Most beginning anglers-- and the Snake River has been for years and years considered to be more of a beginners type stream, our fish are pretty cooperative. You have situations where you have to match the hatch down to whatever it happens to be. But a lot of times they're a little more cooperative and put out something that looks like food. They'll cooperate. Have a little snack. But uh, yeah. We haven't seen a lot of [that]. So the, so the primary thing with beginning anglers is teaching the basic skills and give them, give them the ability to catch, or an opportunity to catch, catch a few fish. You know, it's just like teaching little kids.

James Thull [00:20:16] Sure.

Jay Buchner [00:20:16] Doesn't matter if the fish is this long, or if its this long. All they want to do is really catch something. And a lot of beginning anglers are that way. We've seen a lot of people who've come to our area and, you know, take an interest in fly fishing, continue their fly fishing and graduate on to going, you know, other places. [unintelligible] ranch where the fish have a bit of an education, a little more difficult to deal with.

Jay Buchner [00:20:50] All of them pretty much hit the gong. Ring the bell on that. You know, a lot of cases I think, I think probably as much as anything, at least in Wyoming, where we have a relatively small population and population isn't necessarily our biggest problem, but the change of climate is going to be the bigger issue. Especially, you know, for us. You know, in Utah, where you have a bigger population, or Colorado, those, those dynamics are going to be a little different because of, because of a big population. And a lot of things that are going to generate pollution. Besides, besides, you know, improper land use; whether it's mining, timber, logging or agriculture, can also be a huge threat. In a lot of cases, that's more of a threat to future generations of salmonids. It's because you're, you're impeding their ability to spawn in a lot of headwater streams that have, may not on a given year, have enough water flow to push sediments away so that you have adequate spawning. So there's you know, there's a lot of, there's a lot of threat from that. And we have that in Wyoming, with agriculture. The, the use of, of indiscriminate use of pesticides is not helping anything either because, causing problems with with our pollinating bees, but it's also being a problem with with aquatic insects and. Aquatic insects and their, creates a, creates another level problem with sthe salmonids because its a food source.

Jay Buchner [00:22:52] No, they're all interesting. One of the things that's always been, I've enjoyed, is the fact that trout do not live in ugly places. And it doesn't matter if it's New Zealand, Australia, Sweden, Finland, Czech Republic, Poland, Spain, France. You know, they're, those places are all gorgeous. And, you know, we're spoiled, unfortunately, looking at fishing in Europe, right here where we're sitting in Eastern Idaho, parts of Wyoming, up

through Yellowstone Park, up north towards the Henry's Fork on around West Yellowstone. We're sitting. And when I had a shop, I worked with some of the other shops in West Yellowstone, and over in the Henry's Fork and we drew a map, with a big triangle called it the Golden Triangle. And some of the best fishing in the world is right, right here. And I've been, sampled some of the fishing in other places and I have no reservation that... I don't have to catch big fish. I'm just happy to catch an eight inch fish as I am [with] something larger and like as well. You know, kind of a European philosophy, if it has fins, they, and bite, and will bite my fly. It's a good fish.

James Thull [00:24:20] Yeah.

Jay Buchner [00:24:20] No matter you know what its name is. But yeah, we, we have just some spectacular opportunities for fishing here, you know? And it's not all in places like the Snake River, we have hundreds and hundreds of miles, in Wyoming, of small streams. In some cases they never see an angler in the course of a year. I like to go to places where I don't see another human footprint. I see moose prints, elk tracks, or the beavers cut a treet down on the bank. But in that, with our cutthroats, it doesn't necessarily make them, that you're fishing over dumb fish. They, they become challenging even, even in places where they don't see anglers on a daily basis.

Jay Buchner [00:25:10] Oh, absolutely. Absolutely, no question about it. There certainly, certainly is. And, in fact, you know, a lot of my out of the country fishing has been involved with the U.S. fishing competitions, world fly fishing competitions. We've made friends that I'll have forever. Till we're at another fishing hole someplace. Through doing that in all the countries that you might want to name. Didn't find that quite as much in Africa. I've been in Zimbabwe and Zambia as well, in Africa. And fly fishing was almost an unknown activity. I even had people tell me that I couldn't catch fish on a fly. Not really true. But they had no, you know. So, some of that camaraderie wasn't there because it was introducing something that they'd never seen before. But they were fishermen. So there was, regardless of the technique you use, the manner of fishing, yes there is a camaraderie that regard.

Jay Buchner [00:26:24] In actuality, what fishing means to me, I don't know if I'm going to come up with the story for you, but, you know, in my large repertoire of 26,000 stories, or whatever it amounts to. You know, in a lot of cases, it means an opp, to me, it means an opportunity to learn something. Every day I go fishing and catch some, go, go to a gorgeous place and catch some pretty fish. I'm going to have an opportunity in early June to go to Portugal to fish. And I don't know how you say the river. The name of it. In Portuguese, but it's "z e z e r e" (Zezere River, Portugal) we ran into some fish, a native Brown Trout, wild Native Brown Trout in Spain a few years ago that had, regardless of their size, they retain their par marks. I had to look them up when I came home, from one of James Prosek's books of Fish of the World, and they refer to them as Zebra. OK. They never lose their par marks, and they occur in streams that at one time anyway, tributated into the Mediterranean. You know, a small group of streams around the Mediterranean where these, this variation on Brown Trout. This particular river does not connect to the Mediterranean anymore. But at some time it must, it did. And I accidentally stumbled across it in Prosek's book a couple weeks ago, cause I was looking for something else. And it has a strain of, of these Zebra Brown Trout in them that will be unique in that river, for this west example of a river that has that fish. Or that variation of Brown Trout. So that'll be fun! To get to hopefully catch some, some unique Brown Trout.