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Mark Evans [00:00:11] My brother and I started the store, well the ideas probably started around five years ago. I have been here almost 20 years now. My brother over 10. And basically we were working in a manner that we really wanted to change in our lifestyle basically and our surroundings. We were looking at doing tours. One thing led to another and my brother came up with the idea that we needed an outdoor store in Costa Rica because there really wasn't one like we were accustomed to being that we grew up in the United States and so.

Mark Evans [00:00:50] There it was. We started with an idea and it's grown every year. We continue to add more and more products and things for the Costa Rican outdoorsman and outdoors people, and they say they have very much are getting out more than they were when I first came to Costa Rica. There's a lot more, especially the people of the city the people working in like any any major city correct. They're they finally realize it's a beautiful country and we need to enjoy it. And it's been it's been really nice. We've meet all kind of wonderful people and seeing a lot of people have been been doing outdoor activities for years and lots of new people coming. So it's been it's been very rewarding for us and that's basically we we just we love the outdoors and that's why we opened the store.

James Thull [00:01:50] And over your work in this store.

Mark Evans [00:01:52] Yeah. We a lot of change I mean there's definitely the there's a much more educated fisherman now, as we've discussed. The fly fishing has grown considerably since we opened the store. Partly due to I think to us exposing it as well as also recognizing and meeting people that were already into the into the sport of fly fishing. You have to due to I think a lot of social media, TV, YouTube, people are seeing there's a lot of new people coming into the sport of fishing as well as the outdoors in general the camping and hiking. But they are now seeing it and what are really just starting in the world of fishing just with spinning rods in it and so that that has grown. I've seen that this past year two years has accelerated greatly here in the country. The amount of people wanting to get into the sport. Well it is. We we have been a big promoter of catch and release fishing since we've opened the store. I mean sport fishing the term sport fishing here sometimes is intertwined with just fishing and hunting, like it's for it's for eating even though there is not that there's really for sustenance that there that they can't afford to go buy it at the grocery store.

Mark Evans [00:03:31] But the idea of catching a fish and releasing it doesn't is not part of the culture here as as it is in Europe and the States and around the world. This is changing, and we we here at the store and myself have promoted that greatly. Certain fishing organizations here and there are several fishing associations that are beginning to add, one of them as completely catch and release fishing in the tournaments.

Mark Evans [00:04:04] The other has a catch and release division that people participate in. Many other little tournaments that are being put on by various other stores or group fishing groups. There's these little clubs all over the country that have developed and they the the idea that of sport fishing that we're going to go catch and release the fish.

Mark Evans [00:04:28] And conservation has grown considerably the past four years. I'm very very excited where that movement is going that we have promoted and other organizations within the country. So it's, it's not part of the culture though. The majority of

of the foreign fishermen are going yes, they're coming to the beach areas and they are saltwater fishing. For me it is. Yeah. We you know I love both the fresh water and I love all water but I have several friends that are that offer tours in freshwater, and our freshwater fishery is. We have some some unique fish that or so overlooked from the giant sailfish and Marlin and the roosterfish and things that tend to have gotten most media attention through the years.

Mark Evans [00:05:36] There's another complete fishery within the freshwater here that I promote here at the store and a lot of a lot of local Costa Ricans that I fish with. We like the freshwater. For foreigners are there are that is growing a little bit in the freshwater tourism, but it's still nothing compared to what the saltwater tourist is. One species is. Yeah. And then there's the. From Canada is the is the. You didn't have me on video right now I would remember the name.

James Thull [00:06:19] That's okay.

Mark Evans [00:06:20] But it's there's two strains.

James Thull [00:06:22] Both rainbows.

Mark Evans [00:06:23] Both rainbows. Yes and they. One is the Canadian. The first one was a Canadian trout that was first introduced and then the McCloud. From from my studies that I have and what I have heard. You know they really didn't have. I'm still looking for some of those answers. I do know the gentleman. I do know that they were put in well over 100 to 150 rivers within the country and in the mountainous regions. You know they really didn't have anything in the rivers. And I think it was at a, the idea was just sport level. Yes. And they're you know they've just been here. And but it was not a lot of the areas to access them, it's not easy. It's not like the U.S. or Europe. It's a very mountainous terrain. So most of the rivers, their in cloud forests and and the roads very slippery as lot of a lot of algae on the rocks and it's pretty heavy jungle in some of the areas. So as far as just pull up get out of your car and walk a nice path. That doesn't, that's that's part of the issue that it's not really taken off. Oh yeah. These are all pretty much it is all spring. Yeah. It's all natural. Spring fed yes. Yeah. Yeah. Definitely the high altitude regions here. Yes. Yeah. I mean in San Jose where you're sitting at roughly 3000 feet above sea level, thousand meters or so.

Mark Evans [00:08:17] And the trout. Some of the lower regions run around about 5000 feet. It's about the lowest that the trout can survive with the. And that depends on the the topography the terrain, how well how cold the water stays obviously. But yeah you anything getting above the five thousand fifty five hundred feet level, trout trout are there. And like I said is probably over a hundred and fifty rivers. This is back I think in the 40s or 50s. But these were put in. So they've been here a long time there. There is Tico trout like there's a hybrid of the two strains of the McCloud and the the other strain.

James Thull [00:09:03] The Canadian.

Mark Evans [00:09:07] And so Jessie and I have got some recently that are a nice blend of the two. You can you can see the. You can see both strains and then and then some full strains of both that you can see. It's a mix. I would say the majority of the local Costa Ricans are fishing them with little spinners. OK. Light tackle but then there is a there like I said there's a growing and has been a growing community of fly fishermen here. Both both local and the expats that are fishing them with flies. Yeah.

James Thull [00:09:52] And what other type of freshwater fish are worth going for here.

Mark Evans [00:09:55] Well. As we keep saying the machaca is a very there's two the machaca, guapote, which is called a Rainbow bass. Although it's not a bass it's a cichlid. And the mohara which is much like a sunfish. Or Brim, brim type fish. Those are wonderful for freshwater. But the Machaca is the one that you, is more plentiful. You can go fishing and you you can have a day with hundreds of hits but not that many catches. They're, they're they are the cousin to the piranha. And they have some pretty serious teeth on them. And they're they're a finicky eater. Sometimes they take it. All the way and a lot of times they sort of just play with your with your Popper and tease you. And you you. That's what keeps you coming back for more. It's a very it's very much a top water fish. The action is wonderful.

Mark Evans [00:11:05] Which is what machaca say for most of us fly fisherman is still is the most targeted species here for fly just due to the. And when you do catch them there they're acrobats. They they they jump. You get you usually get several jumps out of them and they're pretty good fighters and they're definitely a lot of action top water action. So really it's it's got a big following here. You know, I I always there's something. I grew- I love the rivers. I really I have to say. If you gave me two choices or one choice between the two. I would have to choose freshwater fishing. I was in the Carolinas about eight years old and I ended up in a beautiful little stream and it really did change my life. It was like I grew up in southern Alabama near the coast. Saltwater. We didn't we had lakes but we didn't have we didn't have mountain streams and mountain rivers, and I don't know what it is about being in the more or more in a forest. I like the canopy of trees. I like the freshness. I like the serenity that comes when you're more in a freshwater environment in Costa Rica in in the mountainous and in some of the lower jungle areas the that that have not been cut, which we have quite a few parks and reserves that we we do a lot of kayak fishing which allows us to cover a lot of territory in several hours basically float fishing. And. It's just. The jungle. I don't know, I like Tarzan as a kid I always had the I loved the original Tarzan the black and white ones and then the colored ones of the 70s and then the cartoon. And I always felt I always felt somehow I felt more at home.

Mark Evans [00:13:12] In the jungle and in the woods. I always felt better as a kid and as adult. And as a big adult. Yes. That's something that drew me a lot to Costa Rica even though I moved to the beach when I came here. I was drawn more to the mountains and into lower into the lower land jungle areas which is where I fish predominately. It's just it's it's peaceful. Well my father introduced it to me and he was no big fisherman. My his his father, my grandfather, was a commercial mullet fisherman in Florida. And I learned actually a little young. I worked with cast net fishing from bridges and docks in Florida for mullet. And about eight years old gentleman a good friend of my father's. He was he was really into fishing, and we went on a trip to Apalachicola Florida to go bass fishing. And my dad bought me a Shakespeare. spinning combo from the local hardware store in town. And. At that time and I haven't seen them since, they sold a little rubber, a little rubber weighted thing to practice my casting. And so I went out the front yard and you know put it like a bucket and I just kept Aiming you know. So I started practicing. And so we get to Apalachicola I was eight. We get to Apalachicola and a gentleman with his little John boat and everything. And he looked at my spinning outfit and said no we're not gonna be using that. I have been ready for this. So now we're going to use these cane poles. So we had cane poles my father and I and George Carpenter. Mr. Carpenter was a Yeah. He was actually at a young life, he was also very influential. He had boats and he had docks in southern Alabama. So we would go out fishing for for. Jacks, Spanish mackerel king

mackerel. But he also had a beautiful dock where we would sit out in the back and fish for speckled trout. Sea trout. And that was really nice.

Mark Evans [00:15:41] So we went to Apalachicola and fished cane poles with little little sardines, little minnows that that the local gentleman had in his John boat for two days. And in the marshes and then up in there, I remember hooking I hooked a gar, an alligator gar, in a little slough and not much bigger than this little pathway right here. And he's and I was in the front of the boat and that thing about pulled a rod out of my hand. It came flying out the air, I saw this prehistoric looking thing. And basically that that between that and a large mouth bass I was I was done. It was fishing. And that's how I started. And after that just a lot of ponds and around around the town I've got a lake fishing for Bream and Bass. That's how it started. So it's more important. It really is. It's not the fishing we're all after we all know. Thoreau says it's it's it's the places it takes us and that's so true. Yeah my kids I do the same thing with my kids. I told them as I look you know they want to go surfing and then they go fishing and kayaking with me and I told them many many times like you know it's really everybody here is really not so much the surfing. I mean half these people can't surf. I can catch a wave or two. But you know I'm no great surfer but that's not what it is. I'm not a great fly fisherman. I lob one out there. But somehow I catch fish in the beauty for me is the places it takes me. And that's really is the ultimate, is the excuse. That's the excuse to to get out of. I mean some of us I mean I'm fortunate enough now I do not live in the city. I work in the city but I am fortunate enough to live outside the city on a small farm. And I can actually hike from my house and be in a national park and drive for an hour and I'm fishing for the machaca. So. So but yeah it really is. Fishing is the excuse to get out. But it is nice to get a tight line though.

Mark Evans [00:18:08] All of the above. We, I think, everywhere in the world this is a big issue. I think we all are aware of that. This is part of pollution is pollution is much greater than I think we realize. Even with all the regulations that are put on. Big companies and corporations. It's still pollution. You know Yvon Chouinard from Patagonia is always keep saying everything we do and I'm not going to be able to quote him correctly. But but basically everything we produce creates waste. And so therefore how are we creating as little waste. I mean we have to live. We have to have clothes. I mean so those things become. The way we purchase, the way we live our lives, how do we consume. You know. We here at the store. It's like you know I didn't realize it at the time but it's like all the packing material have to bring this the footprint that it leaves, bringing it from the states putting it on boats and all these things and then we have. Thankfully we do have recycling in Costa Rica which when I moved here that really did not exist. And so we used to at a store level, we recycle everything you know the bags are full of the plastic. Whenever we're done they go to recycling. That is put on to, where I live there's a water association. There's a there's like a governmental like a national level water association which would be like a state back in the States or in your community. But ours is more of a community and they offer a service. They collect the recycling products. Once a month. So I collect everything from the store the cardboard the plastic. And so these are the things that end up in our waterways here on a local level. I mean you go to the beaches. Everything runs downhill and all the trash that is generated in any major city that is connected to a waterway ends up in the ocean. Period. You can see it here. It's it's a much more, it's a smaller more micro level here because Costa Rica is about the size of West Virginia. So it's a small small state. But how quickly the debris and the pollution that we create in the metropolitan area ends up in our beaches. The communities within Costa Rica have gotten really now for quite a while. Probably a good decade. The communities they go out and they and it's really not being produced there. The trash is not coming from the beach communities right. It's coming from the metropolitan areas through the rivers. They get

dumped down and, you know. The turtles, the fish and everything that it creates. So we have a big issue on our hands worldwide. And yeah for my kids you know my kids are 15 and 19 at this time and they're very aware of it as well. And as we all know it's back to almost the catch and release fishing is something that is not in the culture here at the adults that he may just think we're crazy gringos for throwing back a perfectly good fish and you know we can eat that you know. But the younger generation, I think the education level it's always. It we create the problem for our kids and then it's and it goes on it's a cycle we all know. They are getting more educated on it. They see it. The more that they are exposed to I think at any in any country around the world any any of us any population. If they're out, I think it's why so important to be outside that the outdoor lifestyle be promoted to to enjoy and to start hiking and camping and fishing because what happened or kayaking. You get out there and then you see the result of our pollution, there. And then you realize hey this is not something we want. So I think, at least in at the Costa Rican level I see a to the younger people. They are very aware and they're very conscious about it.

Mark Evans [00:22:35] But always more people need to be. There's not enough though there's not enough consciousness. You know it's hard to say. Climate change. You know I'm not sure how much are cycles that happen, how much are based upon certain pollution, how much is manmade, how much is semi natural. I think there is a mix sometimes. You know what may be happening now through cycles can change again in another 20 years. I don't know on that one as far as climate change. The the the. You know I've moved around a bit. One of the biggest things probably that I've noticed this is the. For example I went back to, like I said I grew up in Florida and Alabama. And I had a friend of my. Panama City Beach Florida. My friends sent me a picture a few months ago. And I was almost shocked. It looked like New York City. It used to just be seals. I can assure you there's not very many seals left. There used to just be rolling sand dunes. So. Yeah. So John Denver said you know tear down the mountains just to bring in a couple more right. So yeah. Mainly human expansion is what I would say that the biggest environmental here. Yeah. Here locally. Some resorts go up in wetland areas and it can be here, can be anywhere in the world. They get around and they they pay off someone or whatever. Excuse me. They know. Way it is. And then bam you have a resort. And it's really a wetland. So yeah I guess I have seen it. But I have to think about it the more we sit here We're gonna get started. We'll start reeling off tons of environmental.

Mark Evans [00:24:51] Dangers that have been done. Yeah. I mean it's. Crops. Pineapples, bananas. We're here at a local level right. So yeah that's that's the I mean you know where does it stop. Thankfully in Costa Rica and in the U.S. it's got a lot although it seems like they're trying to remove some of them, but we have protected areas here. Costa Rica is over 25 percent protected in national parks, and wildlife refuges on the reserves. Of our little country. So one quarter of that has been protected since the late 60s. I see less and less of it here. You can see you can see the damage that's been done. OK to get it undone, that's generations but there there have been a few areas that have been protected and its second growth forest. Second growth but it's coming back and there are there are programs here within Costa Rica to that pay landowners especially those near the protected areas already the parks reserves, to to not cut any more trees and they pay them a very nominal fee but many are doing that. They're, there they're not doing it for the money they're just doing it because the money is. Minimal. So some of those areas now that we're on on the fringes on the edges of these we now have the chance to begin to grow back and creep back instead of being pushed back into smaller and smaller reserves. Now there. You know. Hopefully if that if we can just you know. We're going to grow as humanity and keep ourselves and what we're getting out of the

wilderness is and just say look put up another high rise and stay in that zone and so we can go play out in the wilderness. I mean I don't know. I don't know the. I don't know. But yeah it's best the biggest thing I'd say in 50 years old so definitely seeing the loss of habitat due to growth. Because it's so frustrating. You know I don't know what it is. It seems to be it's more, it's harder. But it's really not. It's actually in many cases it's easier. But it is. I don't know. I don't know what it is about fly fishing. It just seems to be. It seems to be a little more natural. We're using little imitation bugs it's not plastic. I kind of tend to like the more traditional flies and things I mean there's a lot of new fly products and I'm not here knocking anything. I mean I use whatever we do it. I think I think at its root level using chicken feathers and deer hair is kind of like pretty cool. That's pretty cool. You know there's another interesting thing. And I don't tie my own flies because I have some really good fly tyer friends. So although I do want to I want to and you know does that. Yes.

Mark Evans [00:28:21] I did tie for a while when I lived in Colorado. I began to learn some of the basic nymph patterns and some simple things. I have been really wanting to get back into it now. But I guess my time has been very much shorter with work but it's just it's such a it's an art. Yeah. It's it's the idea that you can fool the fish with these little patterns to me rather than a piece of plastic or I don't know it seems it seems more and, more in touch. I think in some ways it is more difficult. I think it can be more productive. I know it can be more productive than traditional. I mean. You know. Hooking or lure fishing. So it's I like standing in the stream. Just standing in the stream or floating the river. One of the two. It's the peacefulness back to the peace. It just brings peace. And. The fresh air the smell of the stream smell the water that fresh water you smell it. Especially if you fall in a little bit and kind of get it in your nostrils. Well I try. I always ask you know a lot of those anglers have a friend that's they're like hey they've gone out with them and they're fishing with them they go Hey I want to. You know. I always ask him where he where do you put out where are you going to go fish. You know in Costa Rica because we have such. I mean literally we can go freshwater and saltwater fishing in a matter of minutes. Literally minutes. So where are you going to fish. I like to. I like to. And I like to quantify or clarify where are they going fishing. And what is their idea. You know if they're gonna be going both and then I try and basically I usually set him up with a spinning because that's just the. Cost wise a little combo with the spinning and I try and.

Mark Evans [00:30:33] Explain. I like to explain to them why they're getting this rod. Why you need this line. I try and give them a little more education on concept of what you're what you're after. Many people who start out think they need something very large. In reality it's like no you don't really. And I try and keep it simple for them. I try and keep trying to get them to stay simple. It's kind of like the Tenkara Rod the simplicity of the tenkara rod. It's I'm not going to get. I don't push them the fly right away. Depending on the conversation I ask where they are and they like to see about the fly fishing and everything else. Go ahead start with us if you want to go there soon enough. At this level. On other levels people that I know maybe know a little little more personal or something. So just skip all that let's just go fly fishing. Interesting favorite fishing story, man. Well I shared the one about my alligator gar. That was that that one that one's sort of really like. That that whole primal big fish thing. That was pretty good. Trout.

James Thull [00:32:00] Have you ran into a caiman or a snake or anything down here.

Mark Evans [00:32:04] Yes we have. We we I've fished with some some little caimans. They stayed with me in my kayak. I sort of like backed up onto an Canyon Negro we were fishing for tarpon. Which is still eluded me in that area but. That this there there's there's definitely way we have crocs and caymen in our kayaks that we pass from time to time,

never had any issue. But we did pass one very very large one once, and we but we saw him far enough ahead and we gave him a lot of space. But day to day we're it's not an issue. It's not really. My favorite fishing story. There's so many.

James Thull [00:32:55] It's always tough to pick.

Mark Evans [00:32:56] It's tough to pick. You know I. I mean my first tarpon in a kayak. That was pretty pretty awesome. I was with a very good friend of mine and we set out to go catch a tarpon the fly in the kayak. And we doesn't. A little over a year ago. My good friend Danny Hagman is from the Carolinas from from Charleston, and so we set out one morning I said we're going to go catch tarpon on the kayak. We'd been out for about an hour and Danny came. We'd been kind of doing a little drift back and forth with the morning wind. Danny came up. This is how we doing it. And I had already gotten real close to shore. I had seen. I could tell that there was like a little bowl. And I was like if I was a fish I'd be trapping bait up, it was like a sandbar, and I could tell it was like a bowl down area through the water. It was clear enough. So I went there and I said No no I'm gonna right here. This is it. I would trap if I were a tarpon I would use this to trap bait right. Danny came up. Put his arm around me says you get ready to hook up you know. I said Yeah I think so. And we just started to talk a little bit for about 30 seconds. There it was.

Mark Evans [00:34:25] Was about 70 pounds. We got it on video. Nice. It was nice. It was a great. That was that that was a great moment. Not just for the fish, that was my buddy Dan. What makes a good fishing partner. Good fishing partner. We're out there to fish. But we're out there, you know sometimes fishing and fishing and you begin to talk. Right. So good fishing partners. is a good listening partner. Sometimes it's not always about the fishing. Sometimes we're talking about something else. Maybe. Personal family. Life. Good fishing partner is gets as excited when you catch a fish and when he catches a fish. Good fishing partner. The lights kind of low and your 50 and he's got 30 year old eyes will help tie that little fly, thanks Jessie. You know. Yeah. Life is short. Don't don't wait. Don't wait to do whatever it is you want to do in life whether it be fish or research. We can all do whatever we set ourselves our minds to do. If we just do it a little bit every day every day every day. Definitely we need to, we need to continue to look at what. Lead an examined life as Mr. Yvon on from Patagonia says. Examine ourselves constantly. What are what are the the our actions what are we doing. Are we or are we helping humanity. Are we helping nature? Or are we we hindering it? Our future generations, ourselves. We, you know. Nature is a powerful thing and again within nature we have to respect it. But we also we need to be in it because I think one of the problems with most of modern society is we haven't been in nature enough. Everybody moved to cities. So that's one of the things I think here with in Costa Rica that I want some of the some of the park lands be more open so that the youth can actually. If you don't know if you never experienced it, how do you know why you're trying to protect it. You need to get out into the forest. You need to go see why these things were made parks. Why they were made reserves. And I think that's the big thing as you get off the off the computer. I mean that it's a tool. I'm not against computers and I live on computers and cell phones like everyone else. But it's a tool. And it takes you so far. And nothing, nothing can replace the experience that you get when you use the excuse of fishing to go out there and do it. Or camping. Or hiking. Get outside. Yeah just get outside, get out get out of it, the walls. Go get some fresh air. Sleep under the stars.