

fowler-darren-2017-06-25.mp4

Darren Fowler [00:00:09] Hundred per cent. So The Fly Crew is just a social get together. This is how it started, a mate and myself, Freddy Krueger and myself, decided we wanted to get a number of guys to get together and tie flies on a social basis. And we got together at a local pub, called Grapes Pub and Restaurant in Benoni, which is east of Johannesburg. And we decided to put it on to Facebook. And from there we just, the numbers grew. We did our first one, we posted photos of, of our event, and guys just started joining us. And we sort of average now at about 35 guys tying flies. We do it once a month. We don't make a profit. It's about the passion and, you know, getting together socially with a bunch of guys who have common interests.

Darren Fowler [00:01:04] Hundred per cent. So, you know, in terms of fishing, it's relaxation. There's a number of adjectives and words that we could use to describe it. But I think the big thing is that, it's a, it's a pastime that allows you to experience what's happening in nature, and just getting out. You know, I think in life too many guys are in the hustle and bustle of everyday life, and we get caught up in that, and fly fishing is a way to escape from, from all, you know, the traffic and that type of thing, and get out into nature and be in a position where, you know, you can be in a river and you get nature sounds. You know God's music, if you would, for, for want of a better explanation. So yeah, in essence, fly fishing for me personally is relaxation, and the places that fly fishing has taken me to, rivers and lakes and that type of thing, is, it's amazing it's an experience it's a life experience. So yeah. It's relaxation and something to do to get your mind off the rat race, so to speak.

Darren Fowler [00:02:17] I suppose, yes. I have a place called [unintelligible], which is on the on the Vaal River. And the reason why it's special is because I've caught the most fish in a day at [unintelligible] and also the largest fish. So we have a species which is the Smallmouth Yellowfish and it's native to, to South Africa and it's just a really good river fish, a strong fish, they fight hard. So yes [unintelligible] in, on the Vaal river. I would have to say that would be my favorite spot to go. It's quite a special place. You know, I think there's something about a place that you go to where you can catch a big fish and numbers of fish and enjoy that. So yes definitely I'd say [unintelligible].

Darren Fowler [00:03:12] Sure. That would have to be, I would say, Providence. Which is done by the, so Providence is an atoll in the Seychelles. I have a mate of mine, Tim Babich, who runs the FlyCastaway. He's the head guide for FlyCastaway. They've actually done a movie called Providence, and it's just an amazing place. There is literally it's untouched and it's just a phenomenal place and they've got GT's (Giant Trevally) running around, it, it's insane. So yeah, I'd say Providence in the Seychelles would be the to-do list. I'd probably go (unintelligible) if I won the lottery to be honest with you, but, yeah, that's that's definitely somewhere where I would go to. If, if we won the lottery.

Darren Fowler [00:04:02] So South Africa has a lot to offer with regards to fishing. I don't think a lot of guys overseas understand the quality of fish that we have in South Africa. I don't think it's exposed enough, or the international market, doesn't really understand what fishing is about. So we have local yellowfish. And these nine different species of yellowfish, and then you have Largemouth Yellows, which is probably the elusive fish in South Africa. You know, not many guys catch a lot of lot of yellows. But what makes South Africa special is the diverse, you know lakes and that type of thing, and we've got sort of isolated areas. We've got a lot to offer to the international market. We have the Small Cape Streams, we have KwaZulu-Natal, which is a province in, close to Durban, that

would probably be the landmark just before you get to Durban, which has got phenomenal lakes and stream fishing on the Mooi River as well as the Bushmen's River. And yeah, it's just, it's a great place, where you can go and catch catch trout and yellow. So, you know, fishing- and then we've got the Vaal River, and we've got the Orange River. So there's a lot of diverse places you could go to, and there's small little hotspots around which are dedicated to, you know, stocking trout in in various, various dams and that type of thing. And the special thing is, you know, fishing in Africa. So you have the opportunity to come to South Africa, and you know you can go and do a, do an open vehicle safari or go and, you know, see nature; elephants and rhino and fish at the same time, I mean you know, nothing better than an African safari and a fishing experience.

Darren Fowler [00:05:56] Ok, so not, not whilst, whilst fishing, but we got stuck in the Kruger National Park a few years ago, where our vehicle came to a standstill and the battery was flat, and the alternator, wasn't charging the battery. And we came across a group of elephant. And we were in a Kombi, which is suppose a van or something to that effect, VW Kombi. Which is what we call in South Africa it's a little seven seater vehicle, and petrol vehicle. And the battery went flat because the alternator wasn't charging the battery. We came across these Ele's it was absolutely crazy. Couldn't get the car started and there's one elephant didn't like the fact that we were there and we had to jump out and you've never seen four guys push a vehicle in reverse, probably for about two kilometres. I think the adrenaline and that type of thing we just pushed one side and we were travelling at quite a speed, probably got up to about 20 k's an hour pushing this car down the road. So ya. But that wasn't a fishing thing, that was just my encounter with some Ele's, which was crazy.

Darren Fowler [00:07:06] I think generally, in terms of sustainability, we've had issues, and still continue having issues in South Africa, with guys netting fish. Or you know, guys not looking after the valuable resource which our rivers and our fish. When it comes to trout specifically, I don't know if you're aware, but trout are not indigenous to this country. They were imported a while back, the same as bass, and there's a big legal fight that's going on. You know, where guys want to eradicate trout in, in South Africa. And to be honest with you there is massive value chain in South Africa with regard to trout fishing. It's a, it's a huge value chain. There is a number of jobs that are created by that and, but I think the big thing is that we need to look after the resource, we need to look after the fishery. You know, most of the guys are encouraging catch and release, and I think what's, what's needed is education. You know, through education, we can accomplish a number of things by educating local communities about this precious resource. Otherwise, we're going to end up not having that resource, and that is catastrophic. So we need to make sure that we get to a point where we have sustainable projects and education, to teach guys why catch and release is so important. Because of the value that the industry adds. Because it is a massive value chain and there's a number of jobs that are created as a result of that. So yes. And I think that that is super important but you know netting, and guys not looking after the resource, and obviously, you know, pollution is potentially an issue. And I, you know, I suppose we could add climate change into, into that as well. There's a number of things, and we need to just come up with projects where guys can take that valuable resource, and educate local communities about how important it is, how important it is. And I think the big thing, you know water, is something that without it, you know fish can't live, humans can't live. So if we don't look after those habitats we're in big trouble.

Darren Fowler [00:09:20] One hundred per cent. So yes, that that goes across the board. I think, you know, internationally, within South Africa. You know for me it's about diversity,

and anybody who's keen on learning how to fish. You know, I think we need diversity, we need a lot more women in the sport. We need a lot of youngsters. So The Fly Crew have embarked on an initiative called The Fly Crew Youth Project. And basically what that is, is to teach youngsters how to tie flies at no cost. So we've got a number of local suppliers who have given us materials, hooks, bobbins and whatever equipment we need, to teach these guys how to how to tie and, you know, irrespective of gender, age, or ethnic group. Our goal is to teach anybody who's wanting to, wanting to join the sport. But we definitely need diversity. We need young, old and it doesn't matter your background, it doesn't matter, you know, if you, if you've been in a, you know, you went to private school or you, you grew up in an area that was, you know, previously disadvantaged, or perhaps you had a scenario where you were, you lived in poverty. I think fly fishing is something that is there for everybody. So yes, absolutely. We need huge diversity. And whoever wants to fish, I think they should fish, and the nice thing about fly fishing is there's, it's a very friendly sport. You know, friends have been made. you'll get onto a plane and fly from anywhere in the world, or just locally, you know, one of our local carriers and you'll be sitting next to somebody on a plane, and it's amazing how; you hear he does fly fishing, or he or she, does fly fishing, and immediately there's a friendship that's formed. So we need diversity. And because there's, there's something about fly fishing which is just, it can't be explained. It's just it's an experience, it's a lifestyle and and yeah. So we need diversity and I think that we have the opportunity to encourage more people to do it. From various ethnic groups, and whether they're male, female, young, old. I think it's sport that can be enjoyed by all.

Darren Fowler [00:11:49] So, you know, depending on where you are, I think the big thing is to obviously try and locate your local fishing club, or a fly tying club, and if you know somebody who, you know, a family friend who's into it, go and chat to them and go seek advice from from guys in your local community whether there's a fly fishing club and I guess you could use technology. I mean nowadays you've got Facebook, you've got Twitter, Instagram and Google, which becomes your best friend. So go and search your local directory, find a fishing club, join them, and you know go go and seek advice from guys that have been involved in fly tying and fly fishing. And I'm sure you'll find sufficient information in your local your local area.

Darren Fowler [00:12:41] Let's be honest. You know I have the same, which I always say to my children, my wife; if there's water and there's fish, I'd like to fish. You know, for me it's not about size, or numbers, or species. You know, if I have the opportunity to fish and it gets me out onto the river, or onto a lake. I don't have a favorite fish, should I say, I just enjoy the aspect of fly fishing. So, you know, it's difficult to say... Which fish would be the favorite. And I suppose, if I had to choose one, I'd be patriotic and say Smallmouth Yellow or Largemouth Yellow. One of those two, probably rank up a little higher than others, but that's just me being patriotic.

Darren Fowler [00:13:35] Oh man, the storytelling. So I talk a lot and the communication aspect of it and the social aspect of it. You know a good, a good fishing partner there's a number. You know sometimes, you just need to keep quiet. Sometimes you need to hear nature, and so I suppose it depends, on where and when you've gone fishing because, you know, sometimes it's, there's a need for silence, and sometimes there's a need to talk and tell stories. You know I suppose a good fishing partner is someone who understands that. You know that knows when to to chat, and you know sometimes you, silence is a good thing and sometimes you just take in the beauty of the sights and sounds around you with no conversation and you're comfortable in that scenario and sometimes you know there's discussions that get had around you know, politics or you know issues that certain

guys are facing, around the world. I think a good fishing partner is somebody who you can communicate with, you know and understands how you fish and understands you as a person. So you know, communication sometimes you're going to be silent sometimes there's gotta be jokes. That type of thing, so yes.

James Thull [00:14:55] Excellent.

Darren Fowler [00:14:57] A diverse fishing partner if you would.

Darren Fowler [00:15:06] So obviously I grew up, the funny thing is, I actually started tying flies before I ever held a fly rod in my hand. Believe it or not. I landed up with German Measles, at the age of 20, and as, as an adult you can actually go blind if, if it's not treated correctly. So they put you into a dark room, and for six days I was stuck in this dark room, and I was going out of my mind. You know, couldn't watch TV because of the bright light. And you're in a dark room, and my dad had gone to the local fishing shop, and he got some fly tying material in a little kit, but came home without a vice. He had a book on how to tie flies and I actually started tying flies by hand. And I've lost half the question, but I'm going through that. But you know, so I started tying flies by hand. And it was quite interesting and probably tied 6, 700 flies by hand before I'd, before I actually got a vice. And that just made things a whole lot eas- a whole lot easier. But some of the guys that I've learned from, we had Pete Roberts who was the fly tying... He was a fly tying coach for the South African side and (unintelligible). And then, I suppose, on the, on the international scene I'm a huge fan of Marc Petitjean, just because of the whole dry fly CDC aspect. And then (unintelligible) there's a number, I can't say I've got a favorite, but I've learned from all of these guys, the custodians of fly tying in South Africa. You know many guys have written books. I look up to, to Peter Brigg, who has written books, he's an artist, and you know we've learned so much from guys that have been in the industry for many, many years. And there's too many to mention, you know? In actual fact, I'd go so far as to say this; that there are so many people, I've learned from youngsters that have come through the ranks of The Fly Crew, you know, who've picked up a technique that might have been developed, you know, recently which we haven't picked up, which is not old school or traditional tying and, you know. So anybody. Your learning all the time. It doesn't matter if you're sitting with a novice, they come up with great ideas, and you get to learn so, you know. But yeah, there are greats out there, but I've learned from a lot of people, just, you know, different ways of doing things. And, you know, somebody who's got a different perspective on how to tie or, you know, seating a tail, for example or that type of thing, anything. And so I've, I've learned from, from guys that have, that have, tied. And it doesn't, you know, it doesn't matter whether the guy's been tying for a long time or not. I've learned from all that I've tied with. So yeah.

Darren Fowler [00:18:05] Here's the thing, is that we as an angling community with a local, international need to look after the resource that we have. There needs to be sustainability and the only way we can do that is through education. So, in parting, I'd say this: take the time to exercise, practice catch and release, and take the time to, to educate people as to how important this resource is. Because without water, we've got issues. You know it's all about the environment, and looking after this precious resource that we have.