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Rodolfo Leon [00:00:10] As a young boy, my family used to spend the summers in a beach resort. We, my, my parents, rented a house and we'd spend the whole three months of the summer there, and they wanted, fishing became an unavoidable part of the childhood experience. You know? Fishing with hand lines. No. And spending all the time in the water. Either looking for shellfish, and fishing. So you kind of, you grow up with that. And that's, that, kind of stays with you over the years, even though you may have long lapses of time when you don't do it, it's still with you. You know? So, and then, into the '70s, already out of the university, I started to work, engage again in, fishing in the beaches. North and south of Lima, we had a group of friends that we, every other weekend, we went over to fish. And it was always a very interesting experience. No? And then, because as life had it, [unintelligible] adult working, I was working for a multinational company, I was sent abroad for a number of years, and kind of forgot about it. Many years after, I was invited to southern Chile. That was not until 2013. And I got to experience fly fishing. Which I really was familiar, from my travel experiences. But I never actually practiced. And fell in love with the sport. And the practice of fly fishing. And that's what I am doing now.

Rodolfo Leon [00:01:48] You know, it's the uh, the cannons of the cast. The elegant unfolding of the line. That drop of the fly. And the anticipation in the sight of a fish rising to take the fly, to take the fly. That's, I think that that's it. Perhaps worth much more than actually catching the fish, you know it's a, so that's what keeps me hooked. And then, not only that, it's like. The feeling of being in the middle of a National Geographic postcard. Most of the places are beautiful.

Rodolfo Leon [00:02:23] Absolutely, yes. Trout tend to live in beautiful places, but I don't go only after trout.

James Thull [00:02:30] Certainly.

Rodolfo Leon [00:02:30] I will go mainly for trout, but I also will fish ther, Dorados in Argentina, you know, and, well the sea run brown trout in Tierra del Fuego, at the very end of the world, which is exhilarating, in itself. Is an experience, in itself. And I also fish in the jungle. For peacock bass. So, I'm a freshwater fisherman. I don't do that much saltwater fishing.

Rodolfo Leon [00:02:59] Yes. I've found myself going, several times, to the Baker River, in southern Chile, you know, that's the water, the river with the greatest water volume in Chile, no? And it's in the very beginning, where it is born from Lake Bertrand. And it's just the setting, the facilities, the amount of trout, the size of the trout. But the place is beautiful ,and the fishing is great. So I find myself going back every year.

Rodolfo Leon [00:03:36] Well. In the Amazon, ah, well. Getting to the Amazon here is not that easy. The infrastructure is not very developed, so the conditions are very, very limited. But I go to a, either to a tributary of the Ucayali River, no? Or a, tributaries of the Ucayali River, or the (unintelligible) River. And then we go for, for the jungle species. The Peacock Bass, the vampire fish, no? And a number of significant catfishes. The fishing is a little bit different, because that's the one place where I don't do fly fishing. Usually, the amount of vegetation around you, just doesn't allow you to maneuver with the with the fly, with fly, fly rods. So I go to bank casting, or spinning ,with the short five foot rods. It's also very interesting. It's a very different experience. Because the jungle is not as friendly as the

southern, or maybe northern locations. It's hot, it's humid. It has lots of bugs. You have to be more purposeful to enjoy fishing in the jungle, which I do, no? But they are very different conditions.

Rodolfo Leon [00:05:07] Opportunities for reflection. It allows you to be with yourself. You know, usually away from multitudes, friends, family, work. It's like, once you engage with that movement at the top of your rod, everything else stops existing. No, you're only fixed on, again, how the line unfolds, how the fly drops, and the surface, the movements on the surface of the water. I guess it appeals to the very, most primitive, most primitive feelings of a human being, no? And the, and this may sound sexist, but it's also I think it's a, kind of a, manly activity. You don't see, there aren't that many women, go into fishing. It's okay, so they go fishing, fine. But just, you usually find yourself surrounded in a very tribal thing, like, all men out hunting, it's something, something a little bit different.

Rodolfo Leon [00:06:10] I think the greatest danger is predatory fishing. No, a, in my experience, basically fishing in Chile and Argentina. There are these places where the, both authorities and the people, have understood that the, touristic activities, that the sport, are of more economic value to them, than the fishing. So they take care of the environment. But again, you have to get to that point where, that's true for the people that live there, where the services they can provide--housing, guiding, transportation--mean more to them than fishing for consumption. So my biggest concern would be that, that, the predatory practices tend to the diminishing of stocks, no?

James Thull [00:07:01] So like, poaching, is that what you're saying?

Rodolfo Leon [00:07:03] Poaching, yes.

James Thull [00:07:03] Okay. So is ,is.

Rodolfo Leon [00:07:05] But not only poaching. I mean, 'cause it's like, it is, your typical picture of a guy going fishing is a few [unintelligible] with his catch of twenty dead fish, and there before him. Fish that he's not going to consume. So, it's not only poaching. It's just that the concept of catch and release is not ingrained in the sports fishing. No? I mean, I'm talking about the grouper hatcheries, I do see more, more of that in the countries where I fish. Not to say that there isn't the poaching.

Rodolfo Leon [00:07:44] Yes. It will have to do with local regional authorities to provide, to develop, protected areas for sports fishing. Where you can only fish with certain tools and the, the catch and release becomes mandatory, and as a way of educating people, no. It's not fun to, kill. Kill for nothing. You want dead fish, there's commercial fishing that provides for you. But as a sports fisherman, you shouldn't be killing.

Rodolfo Leon [00:08:21] Absolutely, yes. Yes. Indeed. I understand to be middle aged and higher. Occasionally, you see some of the younger. But again, I don't know, from my own experience, I started fishing as a young person, it's just that, and then life overtakes you. You have to go to college, you have to, you get married, you have to work. And those first 15, 20 years of your adult life are very, very busy, no? And it's more towards the middle age that you start having the time and attention to dedicate yourself to that so. Perhaps you will not, we, we should expect to see many young people going out fishing. But fishing should be an experience of the younger children, then to kind of leave them with that thought for, for the future of their lives, no?

Rodolfo Leon [00:09:16] In the several, several natural research have been set up. And they are, as far as I understand, more or less, well protected, no? But in terms of cultural protection, I don't think we have that. I don't see the, any talk about that, and it's down to the people who are, again. You look at our example of a sports fisherman. The, the bragging rights are how many fish you have caught and killed. No. So until that changes, those pictures are changed for the individual big catch, and then you release it, and whatever, and forget about killing fish. It's very difficult to achieve that change of mindset, no? And then that applies to all activity related to nature. No. No I, I don't think that Peru is big into that yet.

Rodolfo Leon [00:10:17] That's hard to answer. I mean as a person that has traveled, and seen the infrastructure, and the facilities, and the services that exist to promote fishing; Peru doesn't have that yet. Peru doesn't have that yet. There is some infrastructure in northern Peru, where the big marlin tend to be, almost, but it, I've never fished there, but what I what I know, it's very basic. It's not the level of organization and organized invitations to, or promotion, to go fishing. Like, for example, in a couple of weeks I'm going to fish to Colombia, to the Caura River, a tributary of the river Orinoco. These people have a web page, they set the whole system, some very modest cottages. They tell you what you're going to, where you going to be, it's very modern, very basic. But it's organized. They have all the weeks taken, it's all sold and the, it's just organized. First world organization, no? We don't have any of that here. Nobody offers that kind of service. So I don't know if Peru is ready to offer organized fishing, fishing trips on an organized manner. I don't see that here.

Rodolfo Leon [00:11:38] Yes. Yes. Well, actually, that's the, that's what's being done. Brazil does it, Colombia does it. I mean they, they create reserves. Actually, this, these spaces belong to the native tribes. Which open them up to foreigners, to go fishing catch and release only, because they also provide them with a benefit, which provides them with a source of income, and economic activity for themselves, there's a benefit. But they are the guardians of the integrity of their environment.

James Thull [00:12:10] So do you think that model can work here in Peru?

Rodolfo Leon [00:12:12] Yeah, it could work, in the jungle, mainly, no? And, I don't know if that would work on the coast also. Because, yeah. Yeah.

James Thull [00:12:24] Inland fishing is more viable.

Rodolfo Leon [00:12:26] Right, inland fishing more viable, no. The other, the other notion of, for example, trout in Peru. When I go fishing for trout elsewhere, they ask me, "But there isn't, is there trout in Peru?" Yes. Two things. One, they are very high. That, that good lagoons, with great trout are private lands, usually. And about 14,000 feet high. Really high.

James Thull [00:12:52] And it's mainly rainbow trout, is that right?

Rodolfo Leon [00:12:53] Rainbow trout, yeah. It's the only species. Because it's planted. In second, trout is part of a program, to provide people with food resources. So there's no interest in protecting them. And they are mainly for people to fish, to supplement their, their, their food. So, it's a different environment. It's not, it's not for sport. It's for consumption. It's OK if they get depleted, that's the purpose, no? So, you will have to go to, really to, private lands to, to set up a business that would make it attractive.

Rodolfo Leon [00:13:37] I'm 66 years old. I don't see a change in weather patterns. You have the, your cyclical El Nino phenomenon. You have your summers that are warmer than others. That is, in my memory, that's the way it is.

James Thull [00:13:52] Just the way it's always been?

Rodolfo Leon [00:13:52] So, no I, in answer to that question, I will say no, I have not witnessed any changing weather patterns. I haven't.

Rodolfo Leon [00:14:07] Oh, yes. This, this January, I was fishing in southern Chile, actually in Lake Bertrand. No it's a, a very large body of water. And then I was fishing with a, with a streamer, and caught, what turned out to be afterwards, after 15 minutes of very strong fight, twelve pound brown trout. Great victory. Excellent. We, we return it to the water, I start fishing again, and what starts cruising along, along the beach, on the small, I don't know, 100 yard-long beach? And there were two waters, a total two trunks? Fallen trees, no? Under the water. The very best spring water, and I, got the, casted the chernobyl ant, like like a grasshopper. And I saw it fall, and, from one other, below one of the locks, a brown trout came up. Took it, and jumped. That was a sight of a lifetime. I had gotten much more excitement out of that sight, the trout, after jumping a few times, it got loose. But it doesn't matter anymore. Yes, seeing the whole thing, again, no? Seeing the line unfold. The, the fly fall, the fish come from behind. Take it, make it's run, jump a couple times. But, that is much more exciting to me, than holding that 12 pounder trout, and so those are... and besides, I mean, the settings. Surrounded by snow capped mountains, it's beautiful.