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Michael Stalenhoef [00:00:11] I started fishing when I was a young boy and young about the age of 6, 6, 7. I often went to my grandmother. She lived in Amsterdam and she lived nearby Canal and she lived there. And my grandfather was already passed away and there was a closet in that little house by my grandmother and there were all my grandfather's fishing rods and equipment.

Michael Stalenhoef [00:00:36] And my grandmother start telling me about how big the fish were that my grandather used to catch and all that closet for a small boy. It was really I don't know the exact English word. Interesting, that closet. And there was also a little canal canal behind the house. So that's where I started fishing, learning fishing by myself with. We call it the bamboo rod made out of bamboo. And maybe you in your travel you find it in the world. Normally little boys start fishing with bamboo rods here in the Netherlands And so I also started there first with a thick line, big hook, little piece of bread for roaches. And after that, I collected my own night crawlers start using night crawlers there. And after that we caught our first pike perch. And that's where the love of fishing started early. In Amsterdam with my grandmother.

Michael Stalenhoef [00:01:46] The canals are now fresh water, also clean. If you go back maybe 25 years, the canals in Amsterdam were still dirty. And before that, the houseboats. I live on a houseboat. The houseboats were allowed to put the sewage right into the water. So it was really dirty. And when you go back further back, it was If you fall in, maybe you would die, so dirty it was. But about 25 years ago, the government said we're going to make it cleaner. So now it's clean. Only the big problem in Amsterdam downtown Amsterdam is a if you go fishing there near bridges. You can also catch not only fish, but also bicycle's and all the other things that throw into the water. And then you once or twice a year did not the government, but the people who rule Amsterdam and the city, they go on to clean the canals and you can search it on the Internet if you see what they find in those canals. It's unbelievable, really. So it's a freshwater now. And you can catch a lot of species pike perch zander roach eel. So a lot of people, go fish, there.

Michael Stalenhoef [00:03:11] Sometimes when I was a small boy, I went for for fishing for the eels with with the night crawlers I collected that I told you. And then in those days, there was a lot of eels. Nowadays eels in the Netherlands, is it a species danger...

James Thull [00:03:26] Endangered?

Michael Stalenhoef [00:03:27] Exactly. So if you catch one, you have to put it back. And why is it endangered? Because the Netherlands is not only the Netherlands, but a lot of countries in Europe they use in the river. Dams and also for electricity. And the fish don't have to find they don't they can't find a way back to the sea where they have to spawn So they go through the turbines and cut in half. And then they die. Nowadays they make we call it fish steps. So the fish go around it a little bit higher, a little bit high, and then they find the way back to where they want to spawn. Sometimes when our fish here in in the on the river where my where I do my work, I catch an eel. Then if I catch them when I fish with dead bait, I mean piece of a piece of fish and I'm fishing for Zanders. But sometimes in the summer a big eel comes by. And what I said. You have to release it. Since two years, I'm a professional angler guide and I fish for Zander pike and perch.

Michael Stalenhoef [00:04:51] The predator fish, that's my main target.

James Thull [00:04:56] Is that it sounds like you use bait, but you also use like spinners.

Michael Stalenhoef [00:05:01] Crank bait soft baits, lures, deadbait, nightcrawler. It depends how what the customer wants and what the season is. I think personally it's better in the wintertime to use dead bait and a little bit bigger dead bait. But yeah, I use everything. Maybe if the fish doesn't eat, you can trick them, try to fish, and then you'll get a reaction. You can also see I love to, it's a very old tradition way in the Netherlands, to fish with a float with a dead bait on it and float. It's above the water. Maybe, you know, float it and you can see it. If the float if the float goes bats, then they're really hungry. If they make some, then you see the float. They are just tasting it. So you can actually see how the fish eating on that day on that part of the day and maybe in the morning it's better. And then you see now they're tasting and only. I'm now retired from the Dutch Marines for two years now, and before that I was always fishing. I went on deployments and came back and I went to the store and bought things, went fishing again. And I was a guide also in that day. And it was when I was in the military. But after the military, I always had the wish to become a professional guide full time. And now I'm retired and I've got my own business now, and I'm very proud of it. Meeting people, talking about fishing. I met you, you travel a lot. You told me on the way back to when you came to the houseboat. I've got a little document where I keep how many people from which countries came with fishing with me. And I'm on 19 countries already. So that's and they don't come to the Netherlands for me, but they're on holiday and they look up on on the Internet. I want to fish in Amsterdam. Hey, fishing guide Amsterdam. Perfect. So 19 from 19 countries already. You know, it's nice. And when you talk about with real fishermen about the wind, the air pressure, early mornings, the moon.

Michael Stalenhoef [00:07:40] Then you see, hey, a guy from Australia got the same ideas as a guy in Amsterdam. That sounds very nice. And days goes like this and it's over. And it's very nice. And you get emails with with Christmas. That is perfect. Nice. I think I told you about the water quality is I think it's good that the water quality is going to get better, but it doesn't have to go. The water has to have something eating has to be in the water for the fish. And I think that the people in the Netherlands, that the people who decide that make a big, big mistake. They make the water too clean. And what happens and also what is a big problem? They take away the fish. Some fish out of the water. And those two things, no food and taking the fish out of the water, it means that some predator fish are getting a very difficult time in the water. Also, when the water is very clean, especially with with hot days like this, the sun intense and the plants growing very fast. And if they remove fish, we call it bream (unintelligible). It's not the same thing as the as you guys have back home what we call a bream. They used to find the food in the water on the ground. And when you've got little baby plants, the fish is searching and the little baby plants go and die. If you take away the fish, the plants grow. Unbelievable. So waters in the Netherlands in the summer, the people have to lawn it the water because they can't go with the boat through the spots. Also, the emergency rescue people. They said we have to do something because we can't go. But if a person is in need and we we need to go there because of the water plants. So the water plants are a big problem. The water is getting too clean. It's a big problem. The fish goes away because they can't find any food, so I don't say you have to go back to twenty five years ago what I told you before, but a little bit dirty water. I think it's good and dirty doesn't mean with pollution or something like that, but just that people have a fish, can feed them and continue to grow and stay there. And that's a big problem.

Michael Stalenhoef [00:10:28] And not only I think that, but a lot of fishermen who are often on the water recognize them. And also when you see the for ten years ago how your

catches were, and now, then you can see yeah. It's going back. It's just not good. When the last year to Russia, but when I was in the military, I never fished. I was happy when I got a day off and the rest, but I never took my fishing gear with me or. Then Russia was a very nice experience.

James Thull [00:11:09] What did you fish for in Russia?

Michael Stalenhoef [00:11:11] Also for pikes and perch. In Russia, they have a sort of zander there and they call it volga zander. And it's almost the same as a zander only. It doesn't go grow that big and it doesn't have the typical tooth doesn't have really small tooth teeth. So it's a very nice experience to go there. I never eat my own fish. I'm a real angler, so I make a nice photo. I tried to make a nice photo put the fish back. Also, my customers are only catch and release. If they say I want to take the fish, when we talk with each other with the email, I said, I'm sorry, sir, you have to find another guide because I'm catch and release it. In the early days that people took with them the fish. But in these days, the people that didnt have so much money in their pockets. So when you have a big family with maybe six or seven children, if you get big fish, that means that you can feed your family again. And when my grandfather lived, it was normal. If you get a big fish that that we eat it.

Michael Stalenhoef [00:12:31] So I never did that. But there are some rules in the Netherlands. It's it's allowed to take some fish with you. Depends on the water. For example, on this water where I live on the river, Zahn. You can take with you to fish, for example, zanders. And it has to be bigger than 42 centimeters. But a lot of people, they take with them everything and the zander. They told me it's a very good fish to eat. It's also on the menu in several restaurants. So what do people. They take everything with them and they want to sell it to restaurants. And that's not good for your water. Also, sometimes a water gets dug by, you call it poacher poacher. Poacher and then they put big nets in the water. And in the night they take away. And then you what's happened to my water? And then sometimes the poacher get caught but sometimes they get away with it. So. But they have to stick to the rules.

James Thull [00:13:44] Sure.

Michael Stalenhoef [00:13:44] If the people do that, there's no problem. And I think if you have a poacher on your water, it's terrible. If you have a professional anglerman who was allowed to fish with nets, it's also. If you have the person who does it with his mind, then he knows next year I have to feed my family also. So he puts in his nets and he only catching the fish between 50 and 60, for example and the rest. He let them grow to become, and he can catch them the next year. But a poacher he takes away, he takes with him everything doesn't matter. It does mean small. Big. Bigger. The bigger fish. The female fishers are very important for your water, for their weight with eggs and for the the the the the population in the river continues. And if I would take a fish with me, I never would take a big one, because I think a big one is an old fish. And if you go to a restaurant or to a butcher, you're not going to buy an old cow. If you buy, you maybe a cow. I don't know exactly. But a young cow or not an old one. And that's the same, I think, with a big fish.

Michael Stalenhoef [00:15:09] It isn't. I think it's not nice to eat a big fish, but that's my opinion. But I think there's room enough for commercial fishermen. Recreation fishermen. That's. But yeah, sorry? But what I think is the best plan for the Netherlands. We have a lot of water in the Netherlands. Maybe you've heard about it. A lot of water a lot of water. Netherlands is famous for making land out of water and protecting themself with water. So

we have a lot of water. There are also big ships, big ships, big, big ships who are professional anglers with nets, I told you about it. And they they they say, OK, rules, I don't mind about the rules. Those guys, you have to not. You have to say I take your license. But the best thing is to do if you have the professional anglers with boats to buy them out. I don't know if it's the right words, but it is. And I can understand if you're a real a real angler with with nets, that's in your blood. And if you're from father, from grandfather to father the business goes by hand. And then you want to fish. You want to put out of nets. You want to go out of your bed early in the morning. It's in it's in your blood. But instead of taking the fish home with you, you have to take tourists on your boat and you can show the tourists how you fish. It's good for nature that you put you catch the fish and release it again. It's good for you, for your business, because the tourists have to pay a little bit and the government has to give you some money that you give up the real fishing. And the fisherman is still going to put on his fishing suit and still go out early in the morning and make his nets ready. But the fish that you catch doesn't go to the factory. Now it's go back and you can do for the tourist. You can see it now. We've go fish like this and you put it in the basket. You said it. You show it. Probably tell a little bit story about it. Put it back in the water. And if you do that, then the Netherlands will be one of the best in Europe for for anglermen. So I think that that's the best reason. Best thing to do.

Michael Stalenhoef [00:18:01] Good question. I think I fish because outside, nature, friendship, now my profession, adventure, all those things I think go why, you fish. I love being outside to go out with my boat. Every time you go out, it's different. You don't know what to expect. You can't say on the couch, okay today I'm going to get to 12 zanders. You can think maybe he's going to get a good day, but then you're on the water and everything is in the books that you have a good day. We'll get a good day and then it doesn't work. That's fishing. And if you think it's gonna be a hard day today with the sun and the high pressure. And it works. And they catch a lot of fish. And that's that's that's nice. That's nice. And every time it's a you have to start all over again at the beginning. Get your own rituals. Do this. Do that, do that to that. I I think it's nice to get. And also give me a little bit how you said it, a little bit rest. When I was in the Dutch Marines, I went often abroad. I'm happy now to be home. We have a lot of water and of course, it's nice that you get an invitation. And my Russian sponsor gave me an invitation to go to fish over there. But I don't have a bucket list or something like that. I want to go there? No, I don't have that. The Netherlands is perfect for me. And. In the Netherlands, we're not allowed to go fish with live bait except the nightcrawlers is allowed. But about 50 years ago, it was not allowed to fish with live fish. And I think if those people who voted for that, we call it the Green Party. They say, yes, it hurts the fish in that. I have my own thinks about dead, my own thoughts. I won't say it now. OK, but I think it's possible that sometimes they say you're not allowed to fish anymore, not with a hook, because it hurts the fish. And if a Green Party can put it in a vote not next year, but maybe you never know. And that's a big concern for me, I think. If they have the the right. If they push the right button, for example. And what will happen then? Then you're not allowed to fish with a rod and an hook anymore. And I think those people think about that.

Michael Stalenhoef [00:21:10] They are not real fishermen. They never went with the fishermen and see how gently he unhooks the fish. And take care of the fish with put them in the water. And that's I think is big concern. Absolutely. When when I was a small boy, in the time I went to my grandmother. In the winter, I couldn't fish because the water was frozen. Nowadays in the Netherlands, if there's some ice in the water, everybody's happy. Oh, maybe we can skate, but the winters are not that cold as they used to be. You mentioned the weather, climate changing. We also have it here in the Netherlands, for example. Last summer was very long, very hot. And you can feel it. Also, the water

temperature, you see, you feel it that you see it on your own, your depth sounder the temperature almost 24 degrees. If you if you catch your fish and you feel it, it's almost it's warm. Oh, oh, oh. I've got customers and they ask me again. Can we fish for pike? And even in those hot days. I said, you have to go back. Autumn. And when the water temperatures go, that will go down again, because especially the pikes are very, it's dangerous for them if you go fishing for the pike and the water temperature is so high. You have a real fight with them. You have to. It's just not good for the fish. So you can feel it also, you can notice also with the after a warm, hot day. Maybe you heard about it also last two weeks. Also a lot of thunder and lightning and hail, hailstorms and not only in the Netherlands, but also in Germany. And you can see that the hail storm, hail like golf balls. Unbelievable. So a lot of wind also. So I think it's changing. Of course it's changing.

Michael Stalenhoef [00:23:29] Favorite fishing story, had a story to Russia was a big, big adventure, of course. The sponsor invited me and we I went to Moscow first and they picked me up. And he is. His name is Vladimir (unintelligible) and he's owner of Volga Baits. And here he said he's got a big. How do you say that? The fishing store a whole salesman. And I knew him because I was approached for a bait company called. Now another bait company, the brand called FoxRight. Maybe you heard about it. And he was the only person in Russia who had connection with FoxRight. And he sold that in Russia. Only he. So Russia is a big country and he came often to the Netherlands He stay with me in the houseboat. And last year he invited me to go to Russia. And if you go to Russia, Moscow, the traffic over there, it's unbelievable how people ride on or on a highway with bicycles and repaired cars here in the Netherlands. If there's something happened with the car, there's a big Red Cross and you're not allowed to ride on that ride on that lane. There people lying on the floor repairing the car. And you drive with 160 kilometers an hour to make turns on highways. Everything is possible there. And you go when you're out of the Moscow area. You go into beautiful country, really beautiful with a lot of nature forests. And then you go to a small village with all houses made out of wood. And then maybe I don't know exactly how many houses in the little village, maybe 25, 30, 35 houses. You go and you out of that out of the village again. Forest forest forest forest forest, and animals in beautiful, clear water.

Michael Stalenhoef [00:25:36] And then the fishing in that area, it was on a very big man made lake in 1983, thirty eight. The Soviet Union was still the Soviet Union. They decided to make a very large lake for the electricity. And a lot of people live there. And they said you have to go out otherwise if you stay, you're going to die. So they didn't pay. I ask Vladimir did they gave compensation. He said, Michael, you're crazy. Go out. And those days were those days. And it's a very big water, if I'm correct. It's about 130 kilometers long and about 50 kilometers wide. So I looked it up. And if I remember correctly, about 600 small villages were in that area. So everybody was had to go away. But those those villages are still underneath the water. OK. It's broken because of the currents, of course, but it's still there. So if you go from one spot to another spot, they had to go to the church. To the church. We're fishing. No, no. I mean, to the church in that spot, so with the boat. And not five minutes. No, 20 minutes from one spot to another spot. For us, it's 20 minutes long. Maybe you guys in Americas, it's normal. But for us, we are a small country. So to go to that, you go to the graveyard, graveyard, all those names. Yes. It's very nice to have such an adventure, especially a for I was all my life in the Dutch Marines in the cold days. Russia was our opponent. And now you go as a former Dutch Marines, you go to Russia and meet very nice people. So, yeah, it's it's that's that's a nice experience to have.