

Our First Video
Katsutoshi Amano
The Sato Rod

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One Fly Method
Community Connections
Tenkara Comic

the official magazine of tenkara usa



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@jeremyshehlhorn



Our First Video:
A million views of tenkara in action.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=N40BOFYKR38

The water was running high everywhere in California. It was, after all, the beginning of Spring runoff, when the mountain snow melts and fills up the creeks and then rivers. It's a necessary part of nature's lifecycle, it fills up reservoirs and lakes, providing water for the hot and arid summer ahead. Yet, the timing could have been better.

It was May of 2009, and I had just launched Tenkara USA. While I knew that to introduce the concept here I would need videos, in the months prior I had focused all of my attention into developing rods, lines and flies; figuring out the product packaging, creating a website and all else that starting a business entails. That left no time for creating a video. But now, with the business up and running, I needed that video.

So, I scheduled a couple of film-making friends to help me. But first, I needed to find the location where we could film tenkara in action. A week before our filming was supposed to take place I got in my car and drove for 3-days around California's Sierra Nevada range in search of waters to film.

The first stop, somewhere in the Tuolumne river range, was a bit disheartening. A piece of water I had fished some 3 weeks prior and my first candidate for the shoot, was running so high that I could not even hear a large truck approach as I stared at it wondering where to go next.

I got back in my car, and drove for a couple more hours. Somewhere a bit higher on the watersheds and hopefully without as much water running. Same thing, this whole watershed was blown out.

I also had to figure out a stop at the post office. As the do-it-all person at this nascent company, I brought a bit of inventory with me to ship as orders came in. Even without a video, word was starting to get around about us. That first day of being away, I had 5 orders come in. This was roughly the number of orders I expected in the 3 days I would be gone. Luckily they were for different rods and didn't deplete the inventory completely in one day.

I spent the entire next day driving and hitting several different areas around the Sierras. Each time I was hopeful the next location would provide the backdrop we needed, with not too much water flowing. Yet, each time I was disappointed to find the rivers were running way too high, impossible to fish really. It was starting to look like a video wouldn't happen.

After another stop at a post office to ship things out, and a night camping under the stars in a national forest area; I had the idea to go further north and check out a new-to-me area that caught my eye on a map. It was a risky thing to do. I had no idea if the streams in this area would be well suited for tenkara.



But, if the trip was not going to produce a suitable fishing location anyways, I figured I might as well learn a bit more about the watersheds in the state.

I repeated the process the next morning. Woke up, brewed a cup of coffee and made a quick breakfast that I could eat on the road. I was planning for a bit more driving than the last couple of days and probably drove with my fingers crossed over the steering wheel.

Three hours later, I was ecstatic with what I was seeing. The main river in the area, the Feather, didn't look all that blown out, a bit off-color but really promising considering the number of tributaries feeding into it. Next, was figuring out a tributary that could work well.

Then, shortly after, there it was. I could see where a medium-sized tributary flowed into the Feather river, and it was not only running relatively low, but the water was clear too. I got a rod, line and fly out of my car and decided to follow it upstream a bit.

As I did, the stream transformed from an okay piece of water into a lush and magnificent stream. The water was clear, the vegetation was abundant and verdant. It actually reminded me of one of the streams I fished in Japan. It was perfect. This was going to be the location of the first tenkara film created for people outside of Japan.

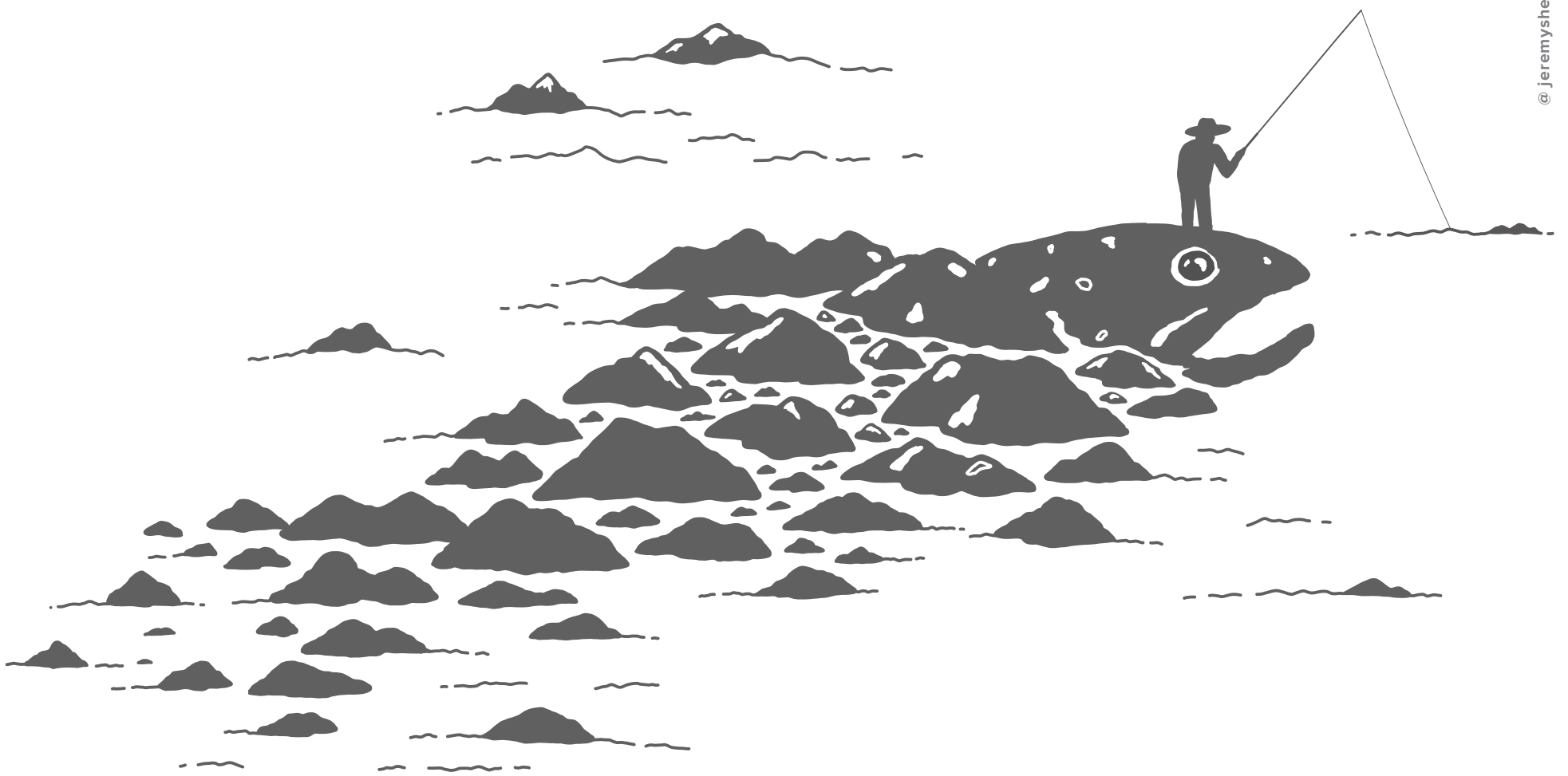
The next week my good friend Masaki, a videographer friend of mine, and his assistant all loaded into my car and we drove to this oasis among the blown out rivers of California and created this video.

It's not the best video on tenkara we have created, and I have learned a lot since then and would have done many things differently now. But, it is the first. One of my favorite things about it is how one of our staff, TJ, always tells me that he gets goosebumps when he watches it, as he remembers the excitement he felt when he discovered tenkara because of it.

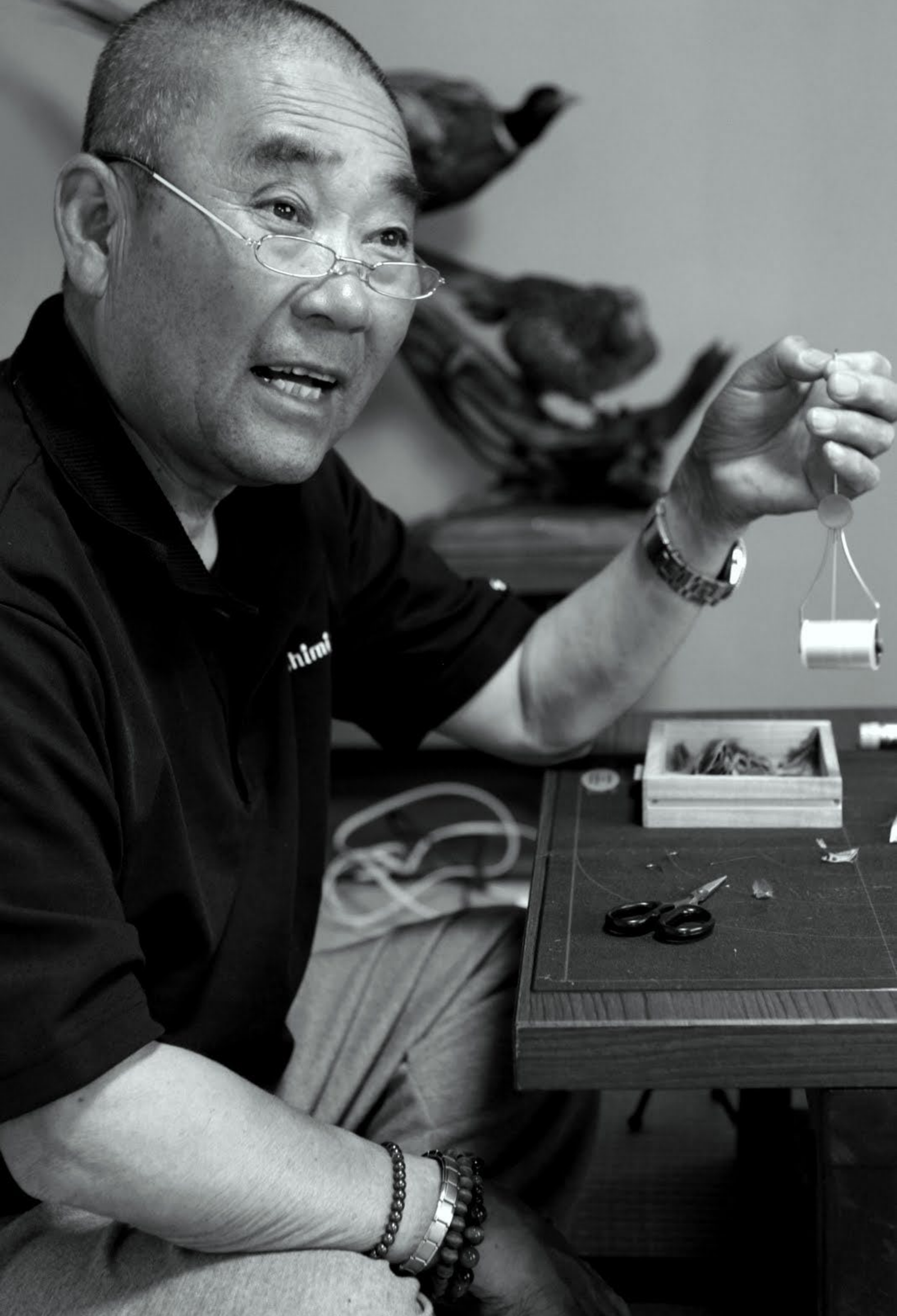
MOUNTEN

two

zine



@jeremyshehhorn





Katsutoshi Amano is a Tenkara Ambassador, a professional angler and has been doing tenkara for nearly his whole life of 70 plus years. Daniel has spent time with Mr. Amano and has brought his no-vise, tye-in-hand style outside of Japan. Here we find some of the first mentions of him on our blog from years ago.

EXCERPT – www.tenkarausa.com/katsutoshi-amano

Yesterday I was able to spend time with Mr. Katsutoshi Amano, who is one of the few people considered to be a living tenkara master in Japan. Amano-sensei is very admired in fishing circles, and he just may be the longest-living practitioner of tenkara in Japan. He is well-known for his very simple fly-tying method using no vise, and eyeless hooks.

This was our second meeting, the first time was a few weeks ago, when Amano-sensei was teaching a class on tenkara with Dr. Ishigaki and Kurakami-san. We fished together for two days and also sat down for a fly-tying demonstration at the end of day one.

He struck me as a very captivating character, someone who would probably have a very interesting tenkara history to tell. I wanted to ask him many more questions, so I asked if he could spare some time to do a fly-tying demonstration and interview. He invited us to his minshuku (a type of hotel that is relatively inexpensive and offers food) in Hagiwara.

His first encounter with tenkara, at the age of 13 or so, was on a day when he was bait fishing but having no success. He noticed a person doing tenkara upstream from him, who was catching fish. He also noticed insects flying around. From that time, he started teaching himself the art of tenkara.



Mr. Amano never had a teacher; all of his learning was through observation of the occasional fisherman he would see, and through experimentation and trial & error.

Unlike today, when he started doing tenkara the practice was generally kept secret. One would have to “steal” the knowledge from others via observation, and that’s what he did. He couldn’t ask someone to teach him for people didn’t want additional competition for fish, especially as they focused on catching fish for eating.

Through many years of experimentation, Amano-san also settled for the fly design he currently uses. Like most tenkara anglers, this is the only fly-pattern he uses. A simple fly, also tied with only thread and hackle. He uses no vise, saying he’s got two hands, so he doesn’t need one.

Amano-san practices many types of fishing, tenkara being just one of them. At one point, Mr. Amano was a professional fisherman, catching ayu fish to sell to local hotels and markets. He also occasionally fished commercially for amago and iwana (the local trout), but those he preferred to reserve for sport.

Despite this history, Amano-san is a conservationist and realizes that the streams of Japan are not what they used to be. Damming of rivers, and the concrete walls erected on the banks of streams have damaged fishing. Unlike many anglers in Japan, Mr. Amano is a strong proponent of catch-and-release and the imposition of limits on streams in Japan, especially the Mazegawa, where he would like to fish more often, but it is considered too difficult nowadays.

A photo of Mr. Amano's fly tying kit.





@jeremshellhorn

Tenkara shows anglers that there is a different way of thinking about fly-fishing, specifically fly-selection and how to go about presenting the fly.

EXCERPT – www.tenkarausa.com/one-fly-tenkara

The whole concept of using just one fly pattern in a variety of fishing situations has been a bit controversial. But the idea works and feels liberating to anyone seeking to truly simplify their fly-fishing.

This is probably one of the most difficult concepts to embrace in tenkara; the idea of using [any] one fly pattern, in pursuit of trout in mountain streams. I have talked at length about the idea of not getting caught up on the western fly-fishing mentality of changing flies in order to catch trout, but rather to learn techniques to use your one fly in many conditions.

Instead of relying on gear (i.e. changing of fly patterns), one can rely on skills to make the fly work in any situation. If the concept of carrying one fly, or at least fewer flies appeals to you, read on.

If you are short on time, the main content I want to share is the section titled “Techniques” below.

Even for myself, it took time to embrace the one-fly concept. I first heard about it when Dr. Ishigaki visited the Catskills, a traditional center of American fly-tying tradition, for a talk on tenkara. Like everyone else in that room, I was VERY skeptical and probably gasped a bit when he mentioned that for the last ten years he has only used a simple and non-descript pattern.

What does one fly mean?

Just to be clear, the idea of using one fly can mean slightly different things to different people. My main teacher Dr. Hisao Ishigaki, who first introduced me to the concept, will tie what is essentially one fly pattern, but in different variations: a couple of sizes (primarily 12, but some 16s and a few 8s), some dark colored, and some light.

On the other hand, another teacher of mine Mr. Katsutoshi Amano, uses only the exact same fly pattern; same size, same color and same materials. I have arrived at a combination of four flies that I use based on what I have learned from my teachers.



Mr. Amano showing his fly box, the only fly that is different is the one I gave him.

What fly do I choose?

Ask ten tenkara anglers to show them the fly they use and they will show you ten different tenkara flies. Thus, in a play of words, it is often joked that “tenkara has ten colors”.

Typically, anglers arrive at their fly based first on suggestions from friends (or something they read), and then they navigate to their go-to fly based on experience. Experience primarily has to do with reinforcing patterns: use a fly, catch a bunch of a fish on a good day, that will be your first go-to fly next time.

Catch a fish on that fly and it becomes your favorite pattern. Because it is your favorite pattern, it spends more time in the water and catches more fish.

The fly really doesn't matter a whole lot. Watch footage of fish underwater and you'll see them grabbing rocks, leaves, twigs and anything that could pass as food. On my first extended visit to Japan to fish with Dr. Ishigaki at one point I ran out of the fly pattern I was using.

I would pick up any of the other flies I had left and ask if it was okay, “Yes, that will work”, he would respond. The third time I asked him if my chosen fly was okay he said, “Yes, any fly okay”.

With that being said, there is a good reason the sakasa kebari, the most distinctive fly used in tenkara with the hackle facing forward, is the chosen fly of tenkara anglers in Japan.

The reason is simple, it is the most versatile pattern. The sakasa kebari can be imparted with movement and fished in multiple water columns with learned techniques. Thus, any variation of the sakasa kebari is, in my opinion, the best choice if you are looking for your “one” fly.

Techniques

Here are 5 main techniques that can be used in tenkara to entice fish. Each can be varied in a number of ways. Illustrations and videos are the easier way to show them (you can find these on our website), so here I'll focus more on the basics with a few quick descriptions.

1) Dead drift - This is the most widely used presentation when fishing for trout. Simply cast your line and let your fly travel with the current, while managing your line to avoid any unnatural drag on the fly. The idea is to present a ‘dead’ fly.

2) Pause and drift - Try this with the rod tip high, and also try it with the rod tip low. Lift your elbow high so the rod tip points down, having the rod tip low and close to the water will make more of the line stay in the water, and thus the fly will be below the surface.

3) Pulsating – Cast a quarter upstream and as the fly drifts - follow it, and at the same time pulsate the fly by moving the rod tip up and down about 3-5 inches. This should be a very controlled movement, not erratic.

And, try working the stream in sections, not super long drifts. Mr. Amano does the up and down 4 times, counting to 4, and recasts.

4) Pulling – Cast downstream and pull the fly upstream, or towards the shore in some cases, at about 1 ft intervals. The rod tip should be low so the line serves as an anchor in the water and the fly doesn't come flying out. This can be done fast, or slower.

5) Sinking – There are a few ways of doing this, but primarily casting upstream from a small plunge, then dropping the rod tip (line and fly) into the plunge to sink. If you are doing this correctly you will see the line staying in place at the plunge and spinning around. Then it will tighten. At this point you will start raising the rod tip and following your line downstream, aiming to get the line tight in case there is a fish.

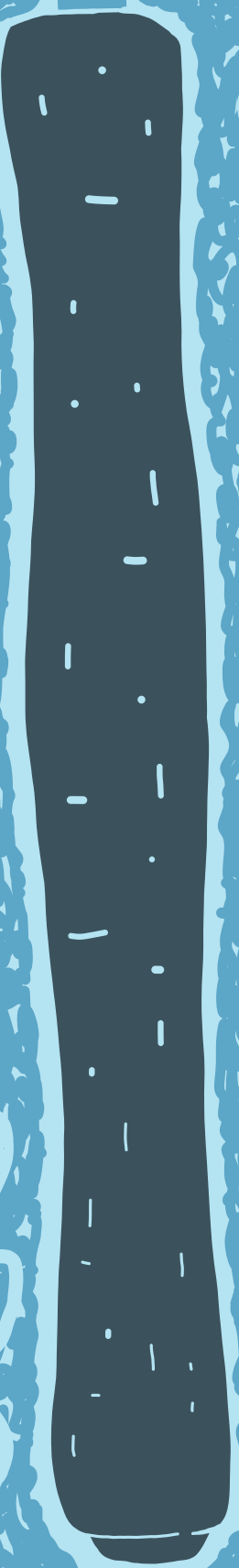
Move, move, move...

I have, in some situations, spent a fair amount of time in certain pools to work a fish and have had success at eventually hooking a fish by changing techniques in the same pool. But, moving to the next pocket is by far the most effective way of fishing. One of the first fishing terms I learned in Japanese was “dondon, dondon, dondon”, which means “move, move, move” and Dr. Ishigaki frequently used this when I first started fishing with him. Fish can have a hypnotizing effect on us and I know when we spot fish we sometimes spend inordinate amounts of time on one.

Just remember, sometimes it's better to move on.

テ 2009 - 2019

TENKARA SUMMIT



BOULDER
CO

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Tenkara
USA®

Tenkara is awesome! As a simple method of fly-fishing that does away with complications and unnecessary gear - the result has drawn forth a growing tenkara community that wants to connect with each other.

Many friendships have been made in the “real” world because of these groups and we’re proud to be part of such a genuine and mindful community. If you haven’t yet already, come join us!

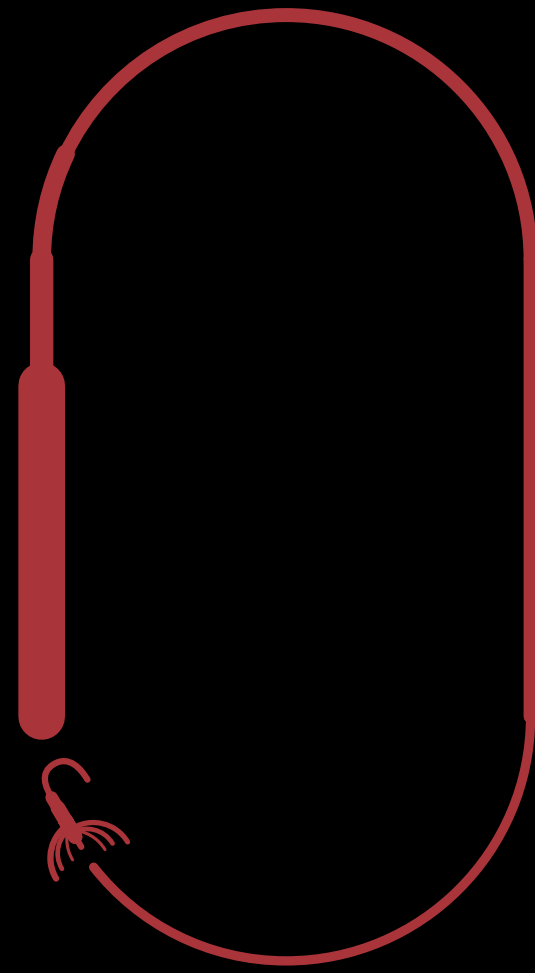
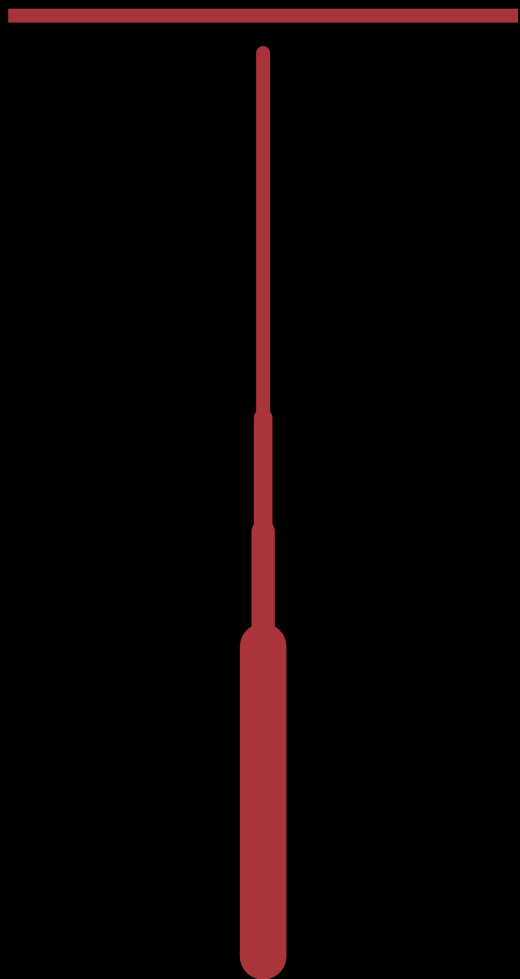
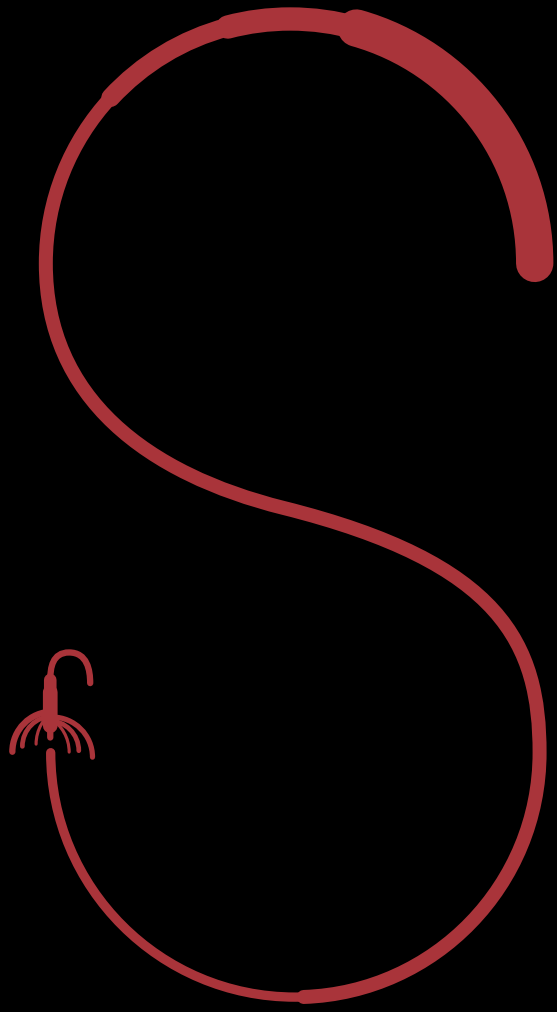
The Tenkara Guide Network™ is a directory of tenkara guides and instructors who use tenkara as their preferred method of fishing. The intent of the network is to put people in touch with guides knowledgeable and experienced in tenkara all around the world. Whether you’re looking for some beginning instruction, or traveling to new water and looking for a local helping hand, this is a great place to start. www.tenkarausa.com/tenkara-guides

Tenkara Anglers Facebook Group - Many people don’t realize that as a company we manage a central group for tenkara anglers on Facebook with over 4K members. Tenkara Anglers was created for those who’d like to respectfully share their tenkara experiences with each other, regardless of brand affiliation. www.facebook.com/groups/tenkara.anglers

Adopt - A - Highway and River Cleanups – If you’re anywhere near Boulder, Colorado, drive up Boulder Canyon. On mile 37 going upstream, and mile 35 going downstream (just about 6 miles into the Canyon), you’ll see this sign. It’s a visual representation and reminder of our ongoing commitment to conservation, and it is our pleasure to organize cleanups along this section of Boulder Creek. Keep an eye on our calendar for event announcements: www.tenkarausa.com/calendar

Tenkara Summit - The Tenkara Summit is an event we hold every other year. It is our gathering of the tenkara community; with the purpose of sharing knowledge about tenkara, and for the community to meet and fish together. It is a great opportunity to come visit and fish in one of the prime mountain stream areas of the United States.

Saturday July 27, 2019 - This year, we are celebrating our 10th Anniversary and this will be our biggest summit yet. It will be held at the Millennium Harvest House hotel in Boulder, Colorado. The weather at that time of year is beautiful, and in the days before and after we hope you will enjoy fishing around here.



MOUNTen

eight

zine



Weight: 2.6 oz (73.7 g)

Closed length: 22 ¾" (57.78cm)

Open lengths: 10'8" / 11'10" / 12'9" (330/360/390cm)

Handle length: 10 ½" (26.7cm)

Segments: 9

The story behind our most popular rod the Sato, starts out with a question, "What rod length should I get?"

By the time Tenkara USA had been established for a couple of years, we had heard this question at least a few thousand times. The short answer is, "12 ft is the standard, 11 ft may be nice for tighter water, and for bigger open waters 13 ft would come in handy".

At that time we offered at least one rod in each of those lengths, so the bases were covered. But if fishing a variety of conditions, it would be hard not to end up carrying several rods in your quiver to satisfy your needs. We wanted to come up with a solution to simplify this.

We started dreaming of how we could create one rod that would be durable and versatile enough to be fished at different lengths.

It also needed to be both lightweight and delicate enough for creeks, yet sturdy for hefty trout in faster water if called upon. A multi-purpose rod that would make it easy to answer that ultimate question, "Which rod should I get?"

Adjustable rods were not a new concept, but with several years of design experience already under our belt, we set out to address some of the shortcomings with the models we had observed in the market at that time. The main issue was how the existing rods were adjusted; utilizing a bulge that would wear down and stop the segments from locking in place within a couple of seasons. So, we developed a few new innovative features; including a way to lock the adjustable segments on the bottom, making them secure and durable.

In December of 2013 the Tenkara USA Sato made its debut alongside its smaller brother, the Rhodo.

Perhaps it's the rod's versatility that's the draw; from small mountain stream trout to hearty warm water bass, the Sato has been my rod of choice since its introduction. Relatively well-balanced and light in hand, I've been most impressed by how rugged it's been. It's the perfect travel companion and travel we have. I've never found myself wondering, "Is this is the right rod for the water at my destination?" MICHAEL AGNETA



There are a few obvious features that make it the first rod that I reach for; the ability to be fished at different lengths, the bombproof construction (which includes an excellent warranty), and the noticeable difference in action from one length to the next. DANIEL PIERCE



I'm sure if you want to nit pick, you can find other rods that are better for specific lines, but I haven't found a tenkara line I couldn't fish with this rod. JOHN GEER



Like for many others the Sato is my go-to rod, it's my choice for almost every situation I find myself in. Lucky enough, I happen to have a great variety of water within biking distance from my doorstep, from the tiniest creeks to big rivers. The Sato handles big fish really well, it's amazing how strong a big grayling can be in a heavy current. The rod is sensitive enough for smaller fish to put a bend in it too. I have yet to find a situation around here wishing I had a different rod. JOAKIM KARLSSON



I consider the Sato to be one of the best additions to my rod collection and probably the standout rod on my tenkara wall. I am also using the Sato as my client rod of choice when I am guiding. GRAHAM MORAN AKA "TENKARA GRASSHOPPER"



Named after Mr. Ernest Satow, an avid mountaineer who was the first person to make a written record of tenkara, the Sato's defining feature is its longer adjustable triple-zoom; allowing quick use of the rod at three different lengths - 10'8"/11'10"/12'9".

With this rod, we feel we've achieved what we set out to do; give you a rod that is lightweight, durable, versatile and feels very precise at any length.

As our most popular rod, we are pleased that the Sato has clearly become a favorite, and has earned such a wonderful reputation in the tenkara community. It even took first place in Tenkara Angler's fun 'unofficial' "2018 Instagram Tenkara Rod Popularity Contest" last year.

The glowing reviews and comments about the Sato (and our other rods) are a testament to all of the hard work put into making the very best tenkara products for our community. We thank you all for your continued support.

UPTENKARA CREEK

number five:
the one knot

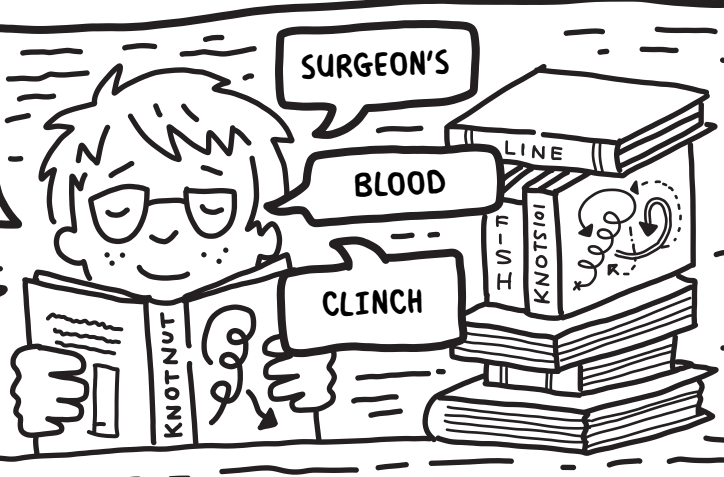
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MR. TANAKA! MR. TANAKA!

I WANT TO BE A TENKARA MASTER LIKE YOU...

FIRST! I WILL LEARN ALL THE KNOTS.



OH. THAT'S NICE



HOW MANY DO YOU KNOW?

THE ONE...

UGH. THERE ARE SO MANY!



WHAT?!

HUH?!?

...IT'S THE ONLY KNOT YOU NEED.

IT'S CALLED A FISHERMAN'S KNOT



1 Form a loop with the tag to the right.

2 Make two wraps around main line.

3 Feed the working end through the two loops.

4 Pull the knot tight.