

Letter from the Founder
Tangles & Snags
Tenkara with Ed Engle
& John Gierach

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To Japan:
In Search of Tenkara
Tenugui
Tenkara Comic

the official magazine of tenkara usa



@jeremysheihorn

january
2019



Letter from the Founder

Daniel Galhardo

Ten years ago I started creating Tenkara USA with the goal of introducing outdoor enthusiasts to a simpler way of fly-fishing.

While I had a vision for what it could be, and even some of what it could become, I could not have imagined the reach and impact tenkara would have in the recreation, philosophy, and even lives of so many people.

I am writing this letter at the Fly Fishing Show in Denver. The show, and essentially the year, always starts here, close to our home in Boulder, Colorado. Thousands of people stop by our booth in the 3 days of show. Some are curious about tenkara, others have been doing it for a while now.

Yesterday, on the first day of the show, people told us: “Thanks for bringing this over, it’s changed my life” (said a man who stopped fishing and hadn’t fished for years before he discovered tenkara), “My 7 year-old started fishing with tenkara and loves it!”, and the more frequent, “I love my Tenkara USA rod!”

This show is a great reminder of how many people we have touched over the last TEN years.

Ten years has gone by in a flash that feels as quick as the strike of a trout.

The best way I have found to realize these ten years are not a dream has been to go through our archives of content, milestones, and experiences and bring them back to life.

And that is the purpose of this magazine, mounTEN: to bring you the best of what we have created, experienced, and shared in the ten years since introducing tenkara to people around the world.

On April 12, 2019 we will be celebrating our 10th anniversary, the 10th anniversary of tenkara’s introduction outside of Japan. That day marks when the tenkarausa.com website went live. We also made our first sale that day.

This year we plan to celebrate the past ten years in several ways. First, by publishing ten issues of mounTEN. These are released on the 10th of every month. We will also be holding the Tenkara Summit on July 27th, and are planning for it to be a big one.

I need to close this letter with a very heartfelt THANK YOU! It wouldn’t be possible for us to be around for so long without your support. You trying tenkara, sharing it, and sharing your experiences with us is really the only thing that has allowed us to be around for this long. You have made it possible for tenkara to spread and for Tenkara USA to exist. And we are looking forward to seeing the next 10 years of experiences you will share with us.

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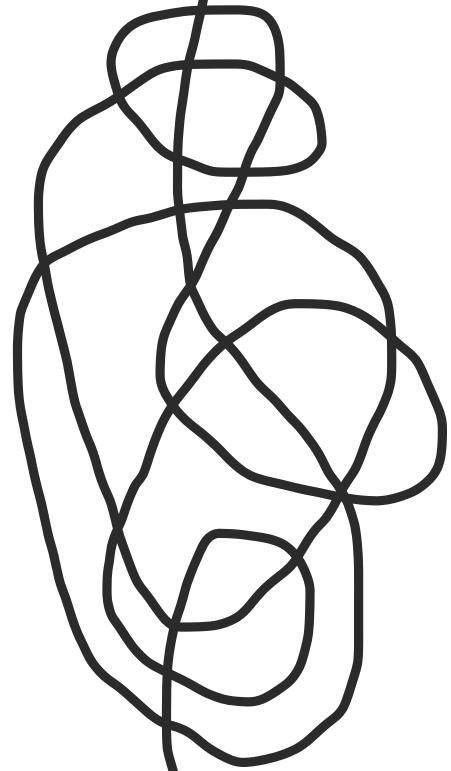
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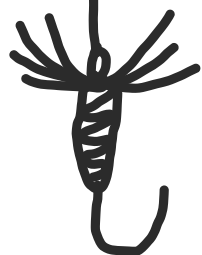
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tangles
&
snags

Tangles and snags can be one of the most frustrating aspects of fly-fishing. With experience we get fewer of them, but there are things we can do to prevent them, and also techniques for getting rid of them quickly when they do arise.

EXCERPT – from www.tenkarausa.com/tangles-and-snags

The Tenkara Cast with Daniel Galhardo is a podcast on tenkara, the Japanese method of fly-fishing that uses only a rod, line and fly. Tenkara Cast episodes are about sharing stories, techniques, philosophy and other information that will inspire you to keep your fly-fishing simple and explore the outdoors. Sharing the tenkara story™

In this episode Daniel Galhardo discusses his observations on preventing and getting rid of tangles and snags. These techniques are applicable to tenkara as well as a rod and reel. We've written a few of our favorite takeaways from this episode for you. We hope you'll tune in and explore some of the great content on Tenkara Cast.

#1 How to prevent snags around you.

If we can prevent getting caught on trees in front of us, behind us and such, we'll reduce our frustration quite a bit.

The main thing is to be aware of your surroundings.

It's by far the foundation of the whole thing here. What this does is allow us to determine what kind of casting we're going to be doing, and what kind of adaptations we might have to do with our casting.

Look for the openings.

Where are the openings that are going to minimize the tangles? One of the beautiful things about tenkara is that we have this fixed length of rod, and fixed length of line. We're not stripping a few extra feet of line here and there; it's much easier to control the rod than it is to control line. Developing awareness of your reach is important.

Another thing you can do to prevent snags is try a shorter line and/or quicker casting stroke.

Also, be aware of where can your fly get caught when it's travelling, either in one pool or from one pool to the other. Hidden branches and obstacles in the swirling water can be deceiving.

As you start getting close to an obstacle in the water, just lift your rod a bit to make sure that you know exactly where your fly is. You don't necessarily have to cast, but be aware and try to manipulate your fly in a way that it's not going to get caught.

#2 Getting caught on the rod itself.

Especially when you've just begun casting with a tenkara rod, you might be getting caught on the rod itself. How do we prevent this and how do we get the line back without getting the tangle too messy?

In my observation, there are two things that usually cause the line to get caught on the rod.

The first one is on your back cast; you know where you're supposed to be throwing the line. If you stop too long on your back cast, you're allowing the line to start falling behind you. Then, when you go to move your rod forward, the line is going to come and hit the rod and get caught. So if you're experiencing a lot of that problem, just on a back cast, instead of stopping and letting the fly drop behind you, just do a very quick stop, don't pause.

The second reason I've seen the line getting caught on the rod pretty often is when people move their arm forward. Sometimes, people have a tendency to punch forward, which is going to make the line more likely to get caught on the rod itself. Very easy to prevent, just keep your arm relaxed and close to your body.

Now here's the little tip that's probably going to make this podcast most valuable to a lot of you today.



To untangle, all you have to do is point and lift the tip of the rod up above your head.

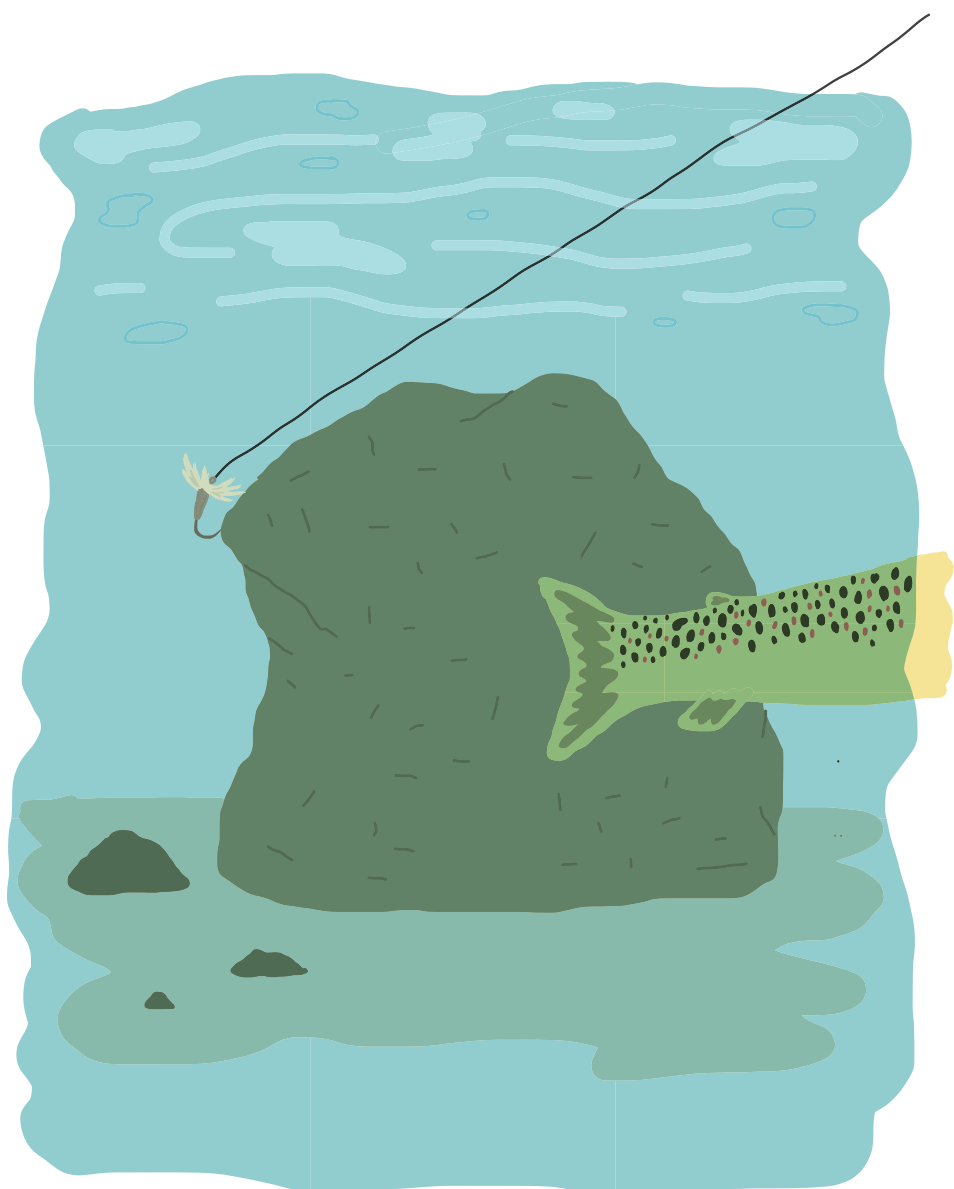
It's almost like magic. When you immediately point your rod up, it's likely the line is going to slide right back to your hand without any frustration. As soon as you see the line hitting the rod do not point it down, do not shake the rod. Calmly lift the rod up, point the rod up above your head, and most often the line is going to come straight down to you.

#3 How to free yourself from obstacles.

Lastly, here are a few tricks for how to free your fly from trees or other obstacles.

For any backcast tree snags, try a really quick flick away from where you got caught. Usually quick flicks with the rod extended; do it like three or four times, and then collapse the rod, and pull/jerk on the line a bit to try and free it. This next technique is one I like a lot, but takes a little bit of a calm nerve to not make things worse.

When you cast forward and your fly hits a branch that you're trying to avoid, the way to prevent getting caught is to STOP your cast.



As soon as you see your fly hitting the branch, you might have a tendency to want to pull your rod back, but your hook is going to do what it's designed to do, hook something.

So next time, if you're able to override your initial reaction, try to stop the rod and just let your line fall; then calmly pull back towards yourself to retrieve your line.

With obstacles in the water, the main thing is to understand how your fly got caught in a particular spot.

Try to determine how the fly was traveling and pull it back the direction it was traveling from.

Really simple example, if your fly was going downstream and gets caught, you'll want to

first try and pull it back upstream to see if you can get the hook to release.

But let's say you're snagged on something across from you, and you're trying to pull it into the direction it was travelling from, but it's not doing anything. Here's a little trick that I picked up recently to try to free it from stuff in the water.

Try shaking the rod very, very rapidly. Just shake it, shake it, shake it. Keep the line tight and shake it very rapidly. And sometimes that will unlodge and free the fly from the obstacle as well.

And lastly, let's say you're upstream from the obstacle and maybe you're pulling the fly up towards you, and it got caught.

With this method you just relax the line into the water, let the current take it downstream from the obstacle, and sometimes this will free it.

Sometimes you still won't be able to retrieve your fly by doing any of these things, but you'll have a better chance by trying.

Last resort is always forcefully breaking, but if this is the case you'll have to collapse the rod entirely, put the tip of the rod inside, put a thumb in there to protect the delicate tip sections, and then pull directly on the line, straight out to break the tippet.

This is why we recommend using 4X tippet or less on our rods, so that you can break it by using your hands if you need to.



tenkara
with
ed engle



and
john gierach

I am still trying to believe that I actually went tenkara fly-fishing in the company of such well-known anglers as John Gierach and Ed Engle who've helped shaped western small stream fly-fishing. Yes, tenkara with John Gierach and Ed Engle!

EXCERPT – www.tenkarausa.com/tenkara-with-john-gierach-and-ed-engle

I was never too surprised that Gierach and Engle became interested in tenkara. I had read their work, and knew they were small-stream anglers and pursuers of fly-fishing simplicity at their core. I also knew we shared many perspectives and ideals about the sport. They would have to be drawn to the simplicity and effectiveness of tenkara!

After Gierach first reached out to me, we communicated for a period of time before I finally invited myself to fish with him in his home waters near Lyons, Colorado. A few days before the trip, I learned we'd be joined by Gierach's good friend, Ed Engle, whose work I also admired and had spoken with about an article he wrote on fly-fishing simplicity.

What I didn't know until I arrived is that both Gierach and Engle have a bit more than a passing interest in Japanese culture. Both Engle and Gierach used to belong to a poetry group in college and were very interested in Japanese poetry, philosophy and culture.

Engle has studied the Japanese brush painting technique of Sumie, and Gierach has been cultivating bonsai trees for over 20 years. In addition, Gierach has also done some very nice "Gyotaku" (the art of making fish prints from actual fish on delicate paper), which now sit in his den – yes, it was cool to see where the magic happens.

Of course, the main topic of our conversations was fly-fishing, but that they had an interest in Japanese culture was a very cool addition. I spent two full days fishing in their company, staying at Gierach's home. This gave us a chance to talk much, and at length about fly-fishing, tenkara's origins and techniques, and many other topics of interest; the conversations didn't stop unless it was before we had our morning coffee, or for fishing. We fished a couple of different forks of the St. Vrain, Gierach's famous home stream. What a beautiful stream it is.



I was also happy to see that they didn't bother changing flies when the fish didn't bite, focusing instead on moving upstream to the next pool, a classic tenkara approach.

MOUNTEN

five

zine





Gierach's 20+ year old bonsai.

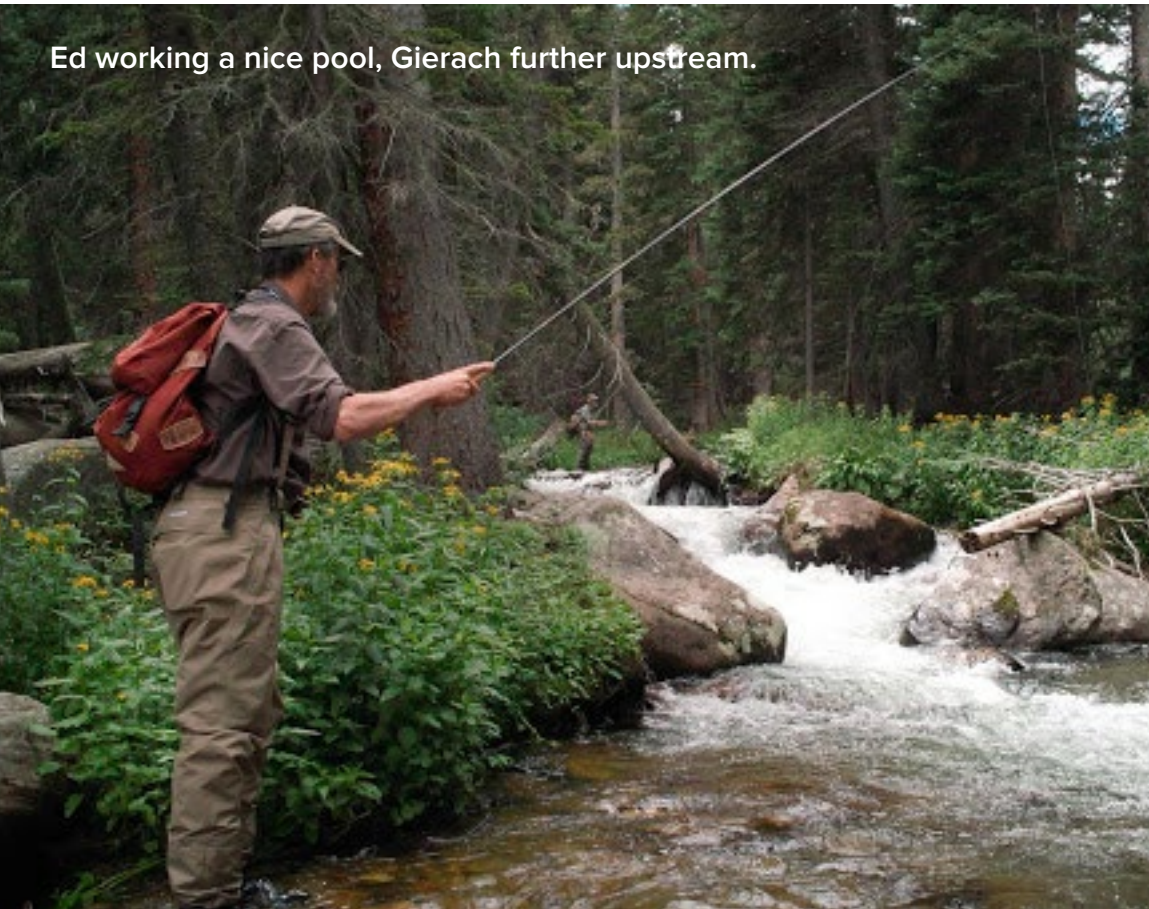
On our first day, we headed to the South St. Vrain, hiking past a picturesque lodgepole forest, and through a mossy trail. We took our time to observe juniper bushes that could become nice bonsai and, of course, also kept our eyes open for branches that could work as tenkara nets. I brought a tenkara net along to show it to them, and I think both of them really liked the concept. Their gazes were now shifting from trail to stream to trees as they walked around.

The point in the South St. Vrain where we started was pretty tight in places, making it challenging to cast, but we managed well and hooked some nice trout. But as we worked our way up the stream, it opened up a bit and the St. Vrain became “tenkara-perfect”.

As we fished, I tried demonstrating the main tenkara techniques: casting upstream and having a drag-free drift downstream, while keeping the line tight; casting slightly upstream, holding the fly in place for a few seconds, letting it go down about a foot and holding, repeating until the end of the drift; casting slightly downstream and pulling the fly upstream at about one foot intervals; or simply casting upstream from the head of a pool, dropping the rod tip so the line would be dragged under, and effectively sinking the fly deep.

During our second day, we visited a more remote part of the St. Vrain, remote for a reason.

Ed working a nice pool, Gierach further upstream.



This stretch required a serious 4-wheeler to get up there. For a bit over 4 miles Gierach skillfully navigated some treacherous terrain with large boulders one would think impassable. It was all worth it when we arrived at a lush verdant area, with a gorgeous “tenkara-perfect” stream running through it.

The air felt moist and smelled of pine trees, my favorite type of place. We hiked for a few minutes through tall grasses, still a little wet from the previous days’ storms, and which had been flattened by what we assumed were moose. We later confirmed this assumption by finding some moose droppings. “If you see a moose, don’t piss it off!”, I was told, as if I would purposefully do that.

As we fished, going upstream, we managed a nice pace, leapfrogging each other to the next pool.

I tried taking pictures in between, and every once in a while we’d reconvene, to either talk about the fishing, or to observe each other trying to fool a trout. Those were memorable moments.

Neither of them went for the “one-fly” approach, and primarily used a two-fly rig (elk hair caddis and a dropper nymph). Nevertheless, we all did very similar in numbers of fish. I was also happy to see that they didn’t bother changing flies when the fish didn’t bite, focusing instead on moving upstream to the next pool, a classic tenkara approach.

Fishing with such well known anglers as Mr. Gierach and Mr. Engle was indeed quite a privilege, and witnessing both tenkara fishing exclusively during our trip and embracing tenkara as the ideal method for stream fly-fishing, was nothing short of a spectacular. **That I could present anything new to these guys is something I’m very proud of.**



THIS PAGE: A stream I fished in Kaida-Kogen,
Nagano prefecture. It had beautiful Yamato Iwana.

FROM THE TENKARA USA ARCHIVES
JULY
2011
TENKARAUSA.COM
BLOG
ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED

TEN YEARS WORTH OF TRIPS TO JAPAN

INSPIRED BY: www.tenkarausa.com/a-few-last-images-from-japan

When Margaret and I got married, in 2007, we started planning what would be my first visit to Japan. Margaret, who was born and raised in Los Angeles, has a few relatives, including her grandparents, in Japan.

As we started planning that first trip, I started dreaming of what the fly-fishing could be like. Then I started doing research on where I should go to fly-fish.

The answer to where I could fly-fish presented itself readily, for when I pulled a map of Japan it was evident the mountainous country presented a nearly infinite number of streams.

It is clear now how much my life has changed because of that first visit to Japan in 2008. That's when I caught my first Japanese trout, an Amago. That's when I saw what tenkara looked like for the first time. And, that's when I realized people needed to know about it.

Since that first visit in 2008, I have had the opportunity to return to Japan 9 more times. The intent always being to learn tenkara from the main practitioners of the method so I could share the techniques with those interested.

Over time, the techniques and nuances of the method have merged together into a broad

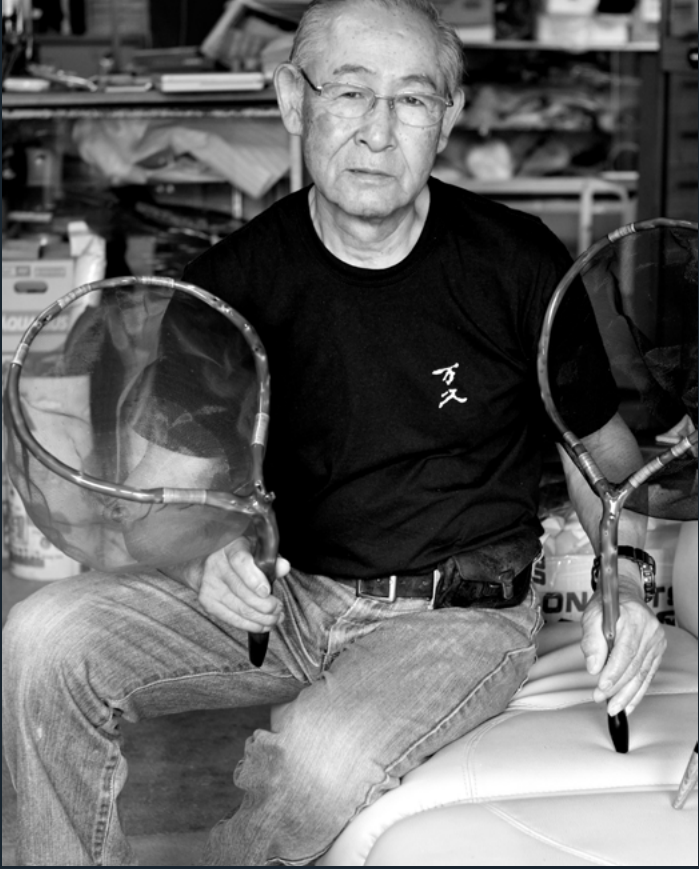
body of knowledge. But stories and unique experiences with different anglers are what have colored the tenkara that I practice and share.

In 2010, a year after I met him, I joined Dr. Ishigaki in Japan for my first visit dedicated to learning tenkara. For two weeks he tried to share all he knew of the method, but by the end of the trip it was apparent there was too much for one visit.

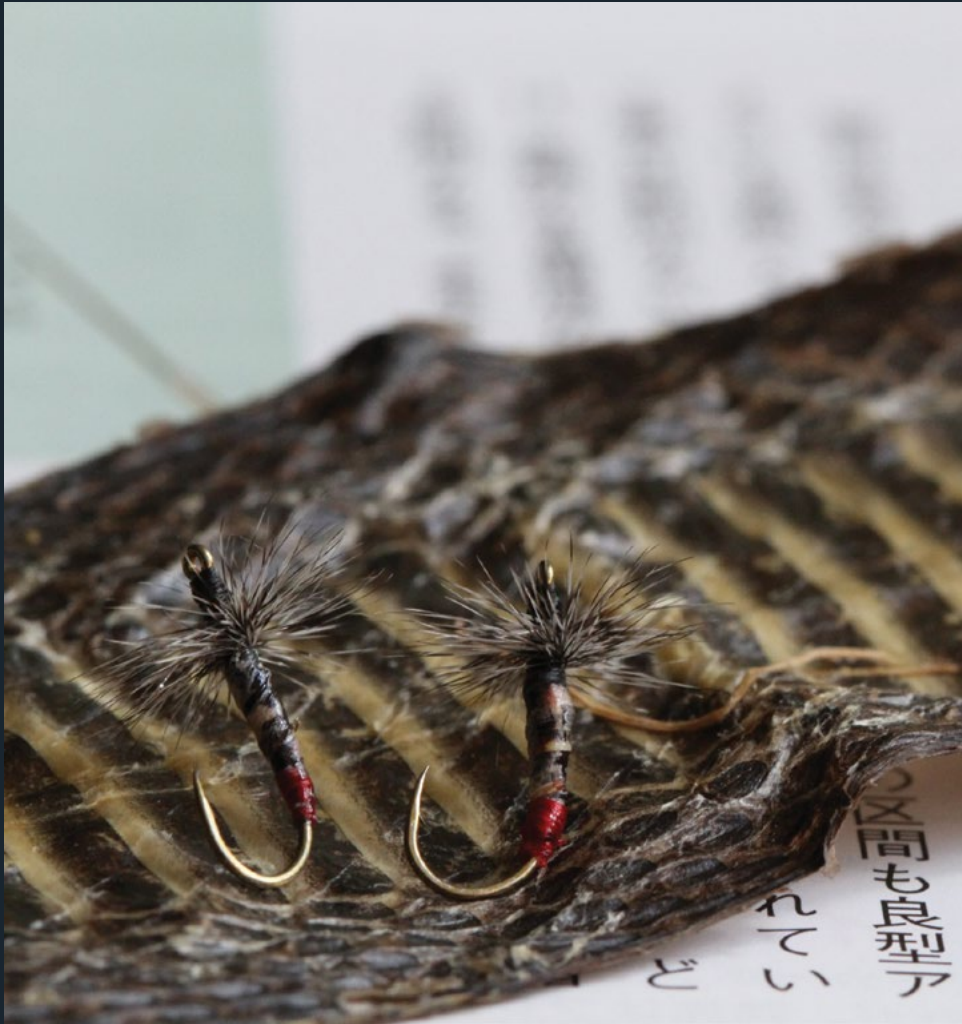
So, the next year I returned for my longest visit so far, and stayed in the small mountain village of Maze for two months. During that visit I learned how to pulsate a fly with Mr. Amano, met Mr. Ishimaru Shotaro, who at that time was about 90-years old and had almost 8 decades of tenkara experience to share. I also fished with friends who took me to secret spots I couldn't hope to find myself. I felt the presence of the original tenkara anglers of centuries past on that trip.

Looking back at ten years worth of trips to Japan makes me realize it is not so much the technique that I have been returning for, but rather the stories and connections with anglers from the other side of the globe.

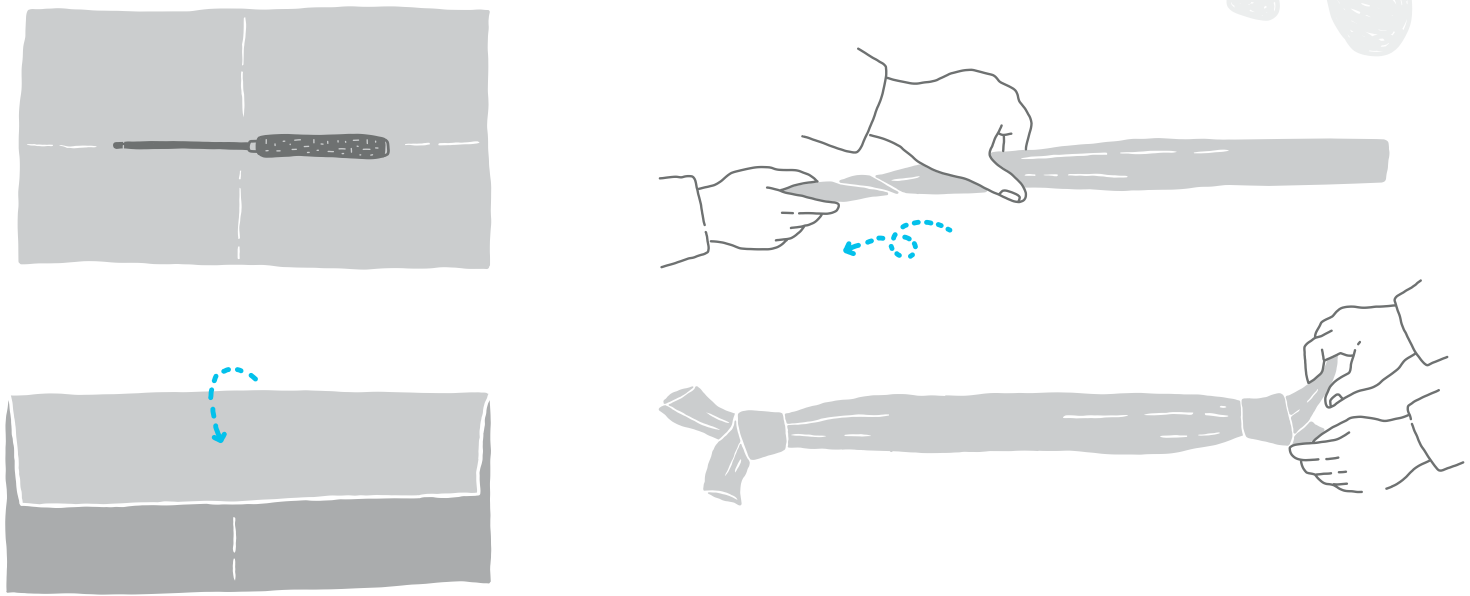
Here are a few of my favorite images from ten years worth of visits.



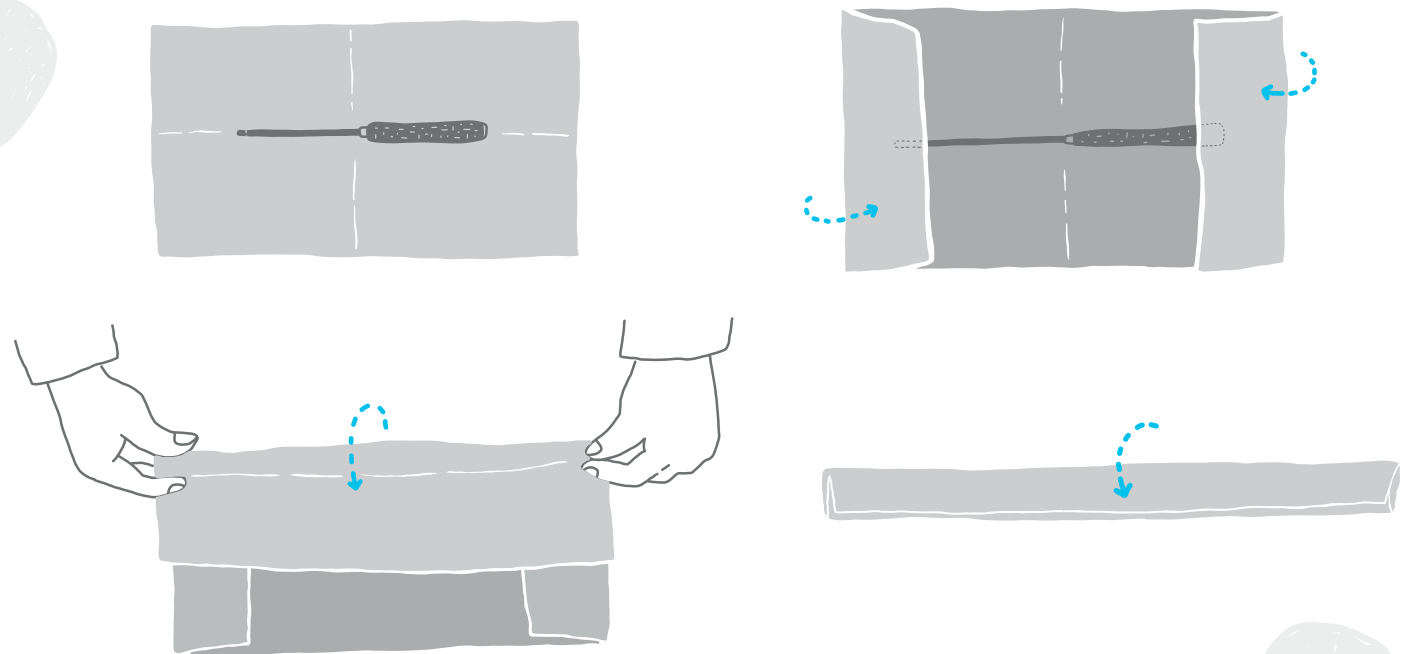
MOUNTEN **seven** zine



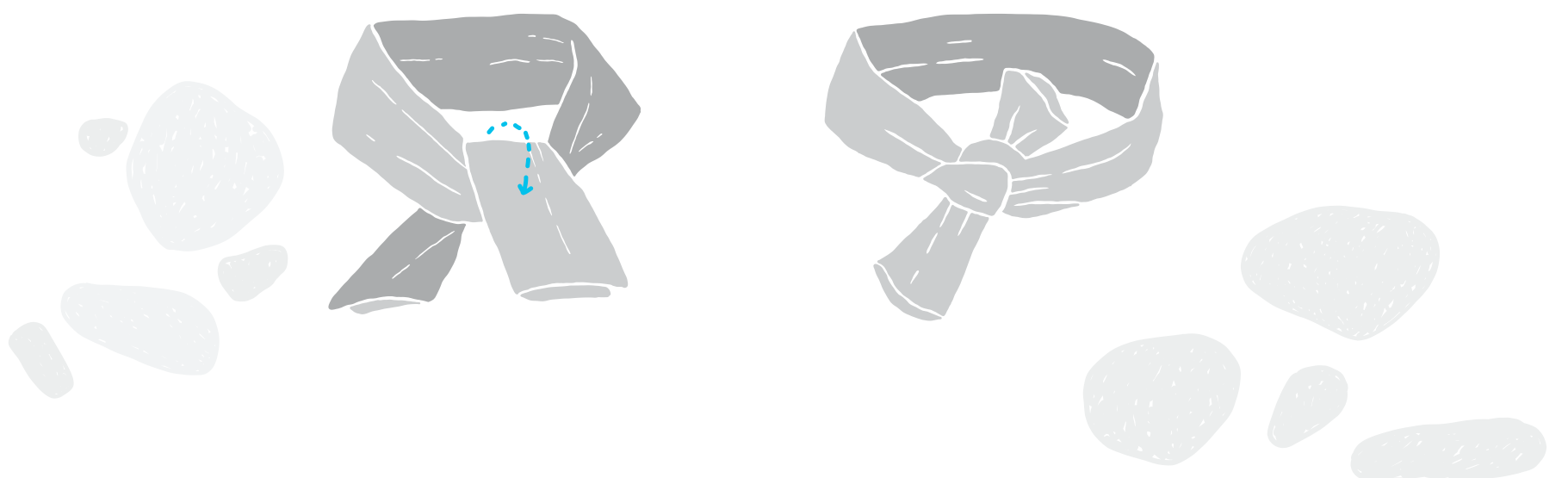
How to make a “twist tie” wrap with a tenugui
(for a shorter rod or smaller object)



How to make a “envelope” wrap with a tenugui
(for a longer rod or object)



How to make a “neck band” with a tenugui
(dip in the stream first to keep cool)

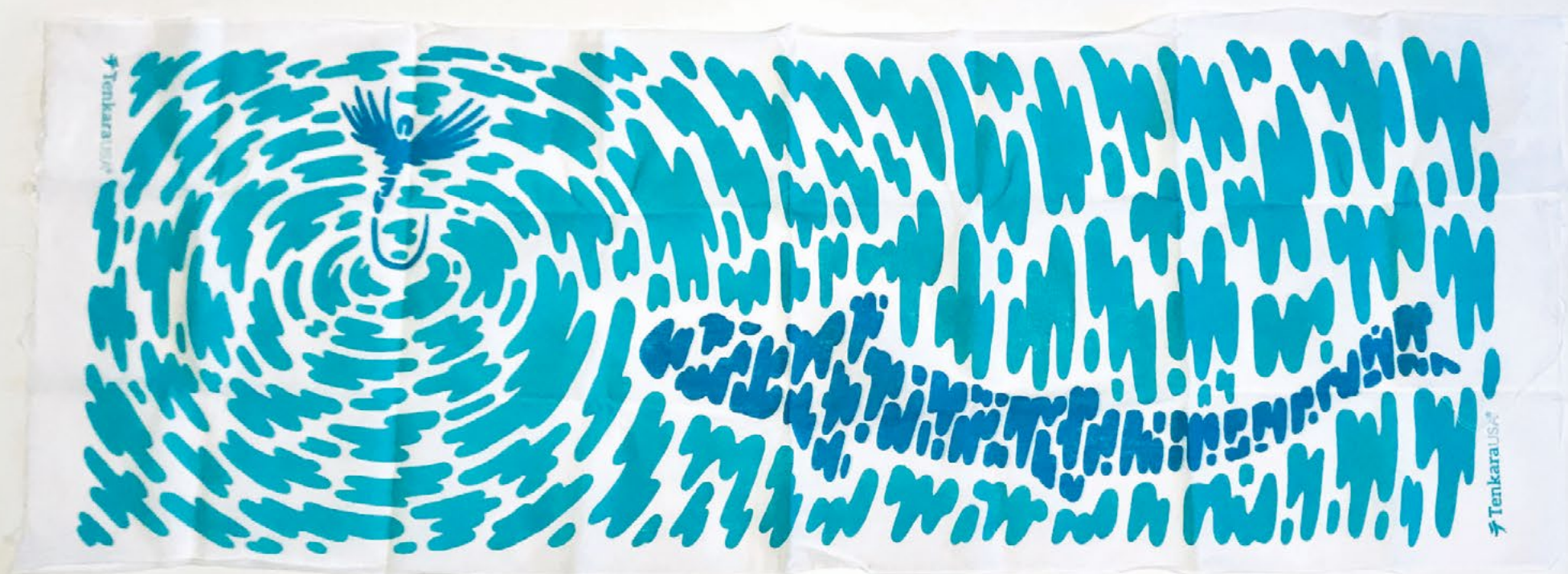


In Japan, the tenugui is an ubiquitous item that can be used for a variety of tasks. The long cloth can wrap your tenkara rod to protect it from scratches or wrap your head to protect it from the sun.

Its thin unhemmed fabric will dry quickly, so can be used as a towel to clean or dry. You can also wrap a water bottle, wrap a gift or simply hang it as decoration.

Like tenkara, the tenugui embodies simplicity but offers great utility and versatility.

The only question now is,
how will you use your tenugui?



Get a Tenkara USA Tenugui at www.tenkarausa.com/tenugui

UPTENKARA CREEK

number four:
sasoi



CAST TO IT.



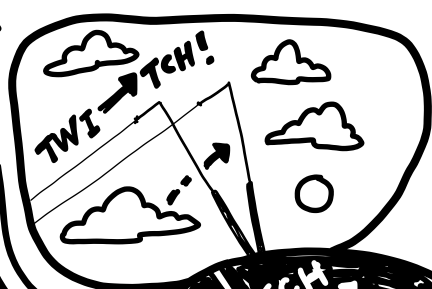
UGH. THIS TROUT IS PICKY.



LET ME TRY AGAIN MR. TANAKA...



THIS TIME TWITCH THE FLY A BIT.



IT WORKED!
FISH ON!

