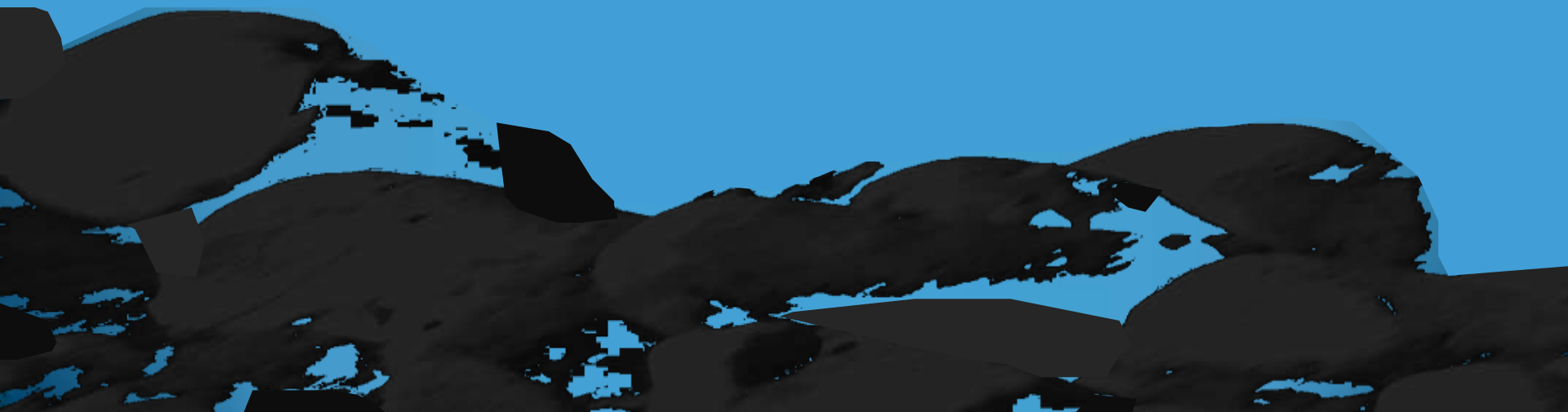


Tenkara Fishing

John Pellegrin
GBF



Topics

- Background
- History of tenkara
- Equipment
- Techniques
- Notable people
- Spread of tenkara
- My experiences
- Q&A

Background

- January 2011 GBF talk by Daniel Galhardo on tenkara. Founder of TenkaraUSA.
- I purchased basic tenkara rig in 2011
- By 2012, fished only tenkara
- Attended Tenkara Summit July 2012

History of Tenkara

- Means “from heaven” or “from the skies”, for how the fly lands on the water
- Believed to have originated 400-500 years ago, among mountain hunters
- Evolved as simple, effective approach
- Documented in late 1800’s
- Modern resurgence of tenkara in 1920’s
- Currently spreading internationally

Typical Japanese Streams



Japanese Stream Trout

- Amago and Yamame
 - Both prefer cold mountain streams 45-65 deg.
 - Similar in size to rainbows



What is Tenkara?

- An efficient fixed tight-line technique developed in streams of Japan
- Overall Philosophy
 - Simplicity
 - Minimize the equipment needed
 - Importance of identifying fish holds and fly presentation
 - Choice of fly not as important as presentation
 - Importance of overall environment

Equipment

- Designed for lightness and simplicity
- Emphasizes relaxed fishing
- Maximizes fishing time
- Allows one to focus on:
 - Locating fish
 - Fly presentation

Rods

- 10'-15' in length
- Telescoping: collapses to about 20-24"
- Made of carbon fiber. Examples:
 - 13' Ayu and 13 ½' Amago: 3.5 oz.
 - 11' Iwana: 2.5 oz.(TenkaraUSA rods)
- Approximately equivalent to 1-3 wt. Western rod

Rod Action

- Rods vary in length and stiffness of action
- TenkaraUSA describes their rods by the relative proportion of stiff lower sections to softer end sections (e.g. 5:5, 6:4)
 - They will be moving to another approach soon
 - <http://www.tenkarausa.com/about.php>

Lines

- Traditional lines:
 - Braided, fixed length tapered line
 - Very flexible with light presentation
 - Tend to be shorter lengths (e.g. 10 ½', 13')
- Level lines:
 - Mono, fluorocarbon
 - Cut to desired lengths (e.g. 10', 14', 19')
 - Can keep more line off water
 - Typically #2.5 to #4.5

Lines (cont.)

- Tippet
 - #5 and #6 usually used
 - Many use fluorocarbon
- Line Holder
 - Very convenient for holding single line
 - Can attach fly, wrap line, and keep attached to collapsed rod

Lightweight Fishing

- My basic rig:
 - 13' Ayu rod (3.5 oz.)
 - 2 Spools of level line: 13' and 18'
 - #5 tippet spool
 - Fly box
 - Nippers
- Total weight: 6.5 oz.
- Can add Amago rod – adds 3.5 oz.

My Basic Rig



Example Start-up Cost*

• Iwana 12' rod	\$158
• High-viz line (65')	\$20
• 2 line holders	\$20
• #5 fluoro tippet (98')	\$8
• 3 tenkara flies	\$7
• Total:	\$213

* TenkaraUSA Equipment

Knots

- Simple by Western standards
- Line-to-rod:
 - Rod has braided line segment at end (“lilian”)
 - Braided line: girth hitch to lilian
 - Level line: slip knot to lilian connection
- Tippet to line: double slip knot against stopper knot
- Fly to tippet: improved clinch

Flies

- Easy to tie
 - Hackle and body
 - Usually finished behind the hackle – no eye crowding!
- Types: wet (dominant) and dry
- Hackles back, straight, or forward (classic style)

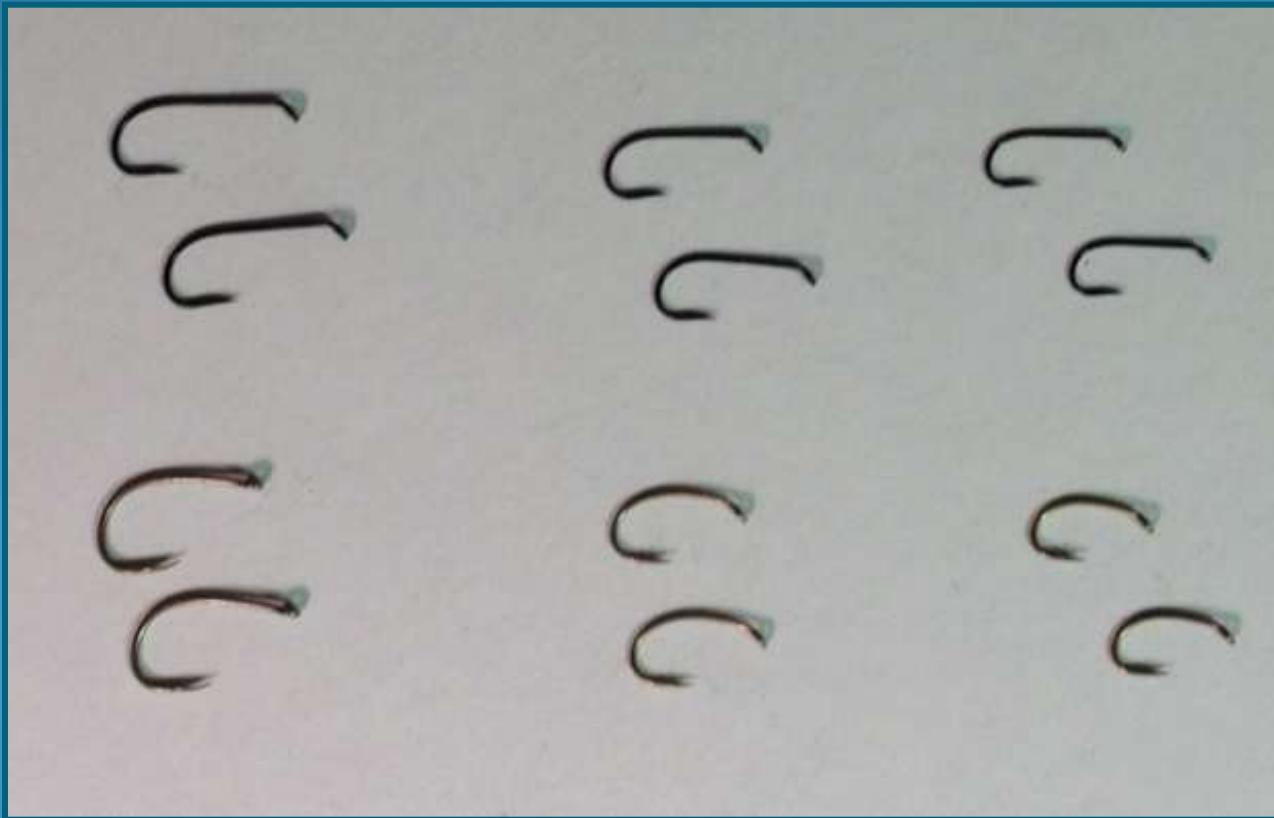
Typical Flies



Fly Styles



Sample Hooks



Techniques

- Tend to use single fly on a given occasion
- Casting:
 - Index finger placed on top of rod handle
 - 12:00-10:00 stopping points on back & forward cast (<http://www.tenkarausa.com/about.php>)
 - Wrist action important, little arm motion
 - Many types of casts, but standard is forward cast
 - No false casts needed

Techniques (cont.)

- Presentation
 - Up, across, or downstream
 - Dead drift (line off water)
 - Dead drift with hesitation or twitches
 - Sideways motions to flies
 - Surface or sunk flies (several techniques)
 - Excellent for popping tippet and fly into pocket water

Dead Drifting Flies



Notable People

- Daniel Galhardo (Boulder)



- Introduced tenkara to US in 2006

- Dr. Hisao Ishigaki

- Leading tenkara authority in Japan

- Masami Sakakibara (“Tenkara no Oni”)

- Considered the top tenkara fisherman in Japan. Widely known for fly presentation skills

Notable People

- Tenkara Guides – Salt Lake City
 - Guide exclusively using Tenkara
 - Both classic and modified approaches
 - Hosted 2012 Tenkara Summit in SLC



Tenkara Summit 2012 - SLC



Dr. Hisao Ishigaki

- Casting Video

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uMza19EFLf0>
- Note elbows in, arm not extended
- 12:00-10:00 back and forward cast (the stop at 10:00 is subtle!)
- Brisk casting and drifting
- Downstream presentation, fly just under surface
- Pulsing of fly

Spread of Tenkara

- TenkaraUSA has stimulated much interest in the US, with full line of equipment
 - Creative Sports (Pleasant Hill) and Fly Fishing Specialties carries their products (no markup!)
 - TenkaraUSA now markets products through 25 dealers in the US.
- Spreading throughout Europe
- Web sites, blogs, YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, Podcasts, ...

Tenkara Modifications

- Places to fish
 - Larger rivers
 - Lakes
- Many fly patterns
- Adapting Western techniques to tenkara rig
 - Nymphing: Czech, Spanish, French
 - Dry fly fishing
 - Western fly patterns (dries, terrestrials, ...)

My Recent Fishing Experience

- Joined GBF in 2008
- Small streams are my focus
- Short-line nymphing was primary approach
- Purchased tenkara rig after Daniel's talk
- Have fished tenkara since 2011
- Fished only tenkara in 2012
- Attended Tenkara Summit in 2012

Places



My Tenkara Experience

- I have become more focused on fish location and fly presentation
- I use a single pattern on a given trip.
- What I like:
 - Light equipment, easy for hikes
 - On the stream fast
 - Change lines quickly
 - Collapse rod for moving around
 - Light presentation, great drifts

Questions

- What about rivers? Y
- What about small streams, long rods? Y
- Steelhead, salmon, striper fishing? N
- Stillwater fishing? Y (High elevation better)
- How much variation in tenkara fishing in Japan? Not the only approach used.
- Where can I get more information? See Links

7 lb. New Zealand Trout



Links

These slides are on GBF website

- TenkaraUSA <http://www.tenkarausa.com/>
 - Daniel Galhardo – info, videos, blogs, equipment ordering, etc.
 - “About Tenkara” section is essential reading for basics of tenkara and care of equipment!
- Tenkara no Oni <http://www.oni-tenkara.com/english/>
 - Masami Sakakibara: videos

Links (cont.)

- Tenkara Guides (SLC) <http://tenkaraguides.com/>
 - Excellent info on tenkara and modifications
- Tenkara Talk (Jason Klass) - blog <http://www.tenkaratalk.com/>
- Tenkara Bum <http://www.tenkarabum.com/>
 - Equipment info
- Tenkara Fisher <http://www.tenkara-fisher.com/content.php>
 - Equipment and interviews

Books

- Tenkara Fly Fishing – Insights & Strategies, David E. Dirks, 2013
- Tenkara – Radically Simple, Ultralight Fly Fishing, Kevin D. Kelleher, with Misako Ishimura, 2011

Thanks!



John.Pellegrin@comcast.net