higashi-tomonori-2019-04-29f.mp4

Tomonori Higashi [00:00:11] It's because of my father, I think, cuz in my family didn't fish, but my father did so. And luckily I was born, raised in the house closs to the river, which is flowing in the central Kumamoto southern part of Japan. So I always had carp, days, that kind of family available, not salmonids no trout no salmon but carp family. So we used to go fish them with my father. And have a very good memory with my father. As a kid we used to go out, especially in summertime, night fishing like I was I think I was liking 10 or 11 years old.

James Thull [00:01:04] And what year would have been roughly?

Tomonori Higashi [00:01:07] 1970 Three, four something. And that I was born sixty five. So, yeah, something like that just just after I went into elementary school. And he had a car, And what I liked with night fishing and with him was that, you know, the the what you call it Litefloat. Yeah lightfloat was being introduced was a new thing. Are the very small light bulb in the top of the float. So we can, you know, throw it in the dark and we can still see that fish bite. So in summer vacation, we go to the sea. We know just lay on the concrete, you know, ground and watch for the bobber to go down. It was really very relaxing way to fish. And that's a very good memory of me. Summertime fishing with my father. Yeah. So that's that's my father. Yeah, that's right, that's right. We strictly harvest it for food, for dinner. And what we like to do is like small bream, snapper, small bass kind of thing and jack mackerel. So, yes, small fish. But there I was a small so that was a tall fish, like that. Mm hmm. Yeah. Think the first time I called sea bass, night fishing. It wasn't a gigantic thing. It was just maybe this much. But we are ready for small bream like that. So Bass like this, you know, to us put that craze and jumped. So that really surprised me. That was good eating.

Tomonori Higashi [00:03:08] I know it's interesting in some area, I'm from Kyushu Island, which is kind of remote from mainland Japan. And back then when I was a high school student, when I started fly-fishing salmonoids and trout. Not many, because I think because of the lack of the stocking program. Nowadays, the stocking programs heavy, so we can pretty much rely on Solid resource. Wherever we go to sea we can pretty much sure that fish are there. But back then when everything was, you know, put and take after X number of days opening, there was no fish in the river. So in a sense, the fishing situation is improving. But the other cases, like the ocean, River fishing, gradually improving, ocean I think it's gone down cause you know, it's really difficult to stock a fish in the ocean and we are a fish eating people. Actually, we admit and still in the ocean fishing they want to bag everything they catch, which should change soon, I think. And I think change is coming. But I hope it's sooner. I think so. I think so. For example, the trout fishing in Japanese streams, younger generation. I don't think they harvest. No, I don't think they harvest. No fish. Trout we call yamame, like cherry salmon we let go. But the old generation people who are so used to know bagging everything, they still want to bag. So we have to find some compromise, too, to coexist with each other. But the climate is I mean, the angling climate is gradually changing toward the catch and release or more, you know, fair distribution of the reach of some anglers. I think. You know, we have Native cherry Salmon, yamame, which are landlocked cherry salmon. And we have char. Yeah. So char and yamame are two major trout fish that we fish in Mountain Stream. You know, we are so diversified in method, and I think we catch, I mean the Japanese people try to catch almost everything that swims unless it's smaller than this or larger than that. And so, you know, if you take a look at the general fishing catalog produced by like major makers, like Daiwa Shima, you'll be amazed at the category number of the categories, you know,

say we special fish for goby like that. We special fish for trigger fish this big. We fish for deep water species going down to one kilometer down. It's almost beyond my imagination. So we are really our fish, I mean, fishing culture really diversified, so. Yeah, and that's true. So yeah, mostly bait fishing. Yeah. So if you go to fish and tackle store in Japan, rods different kinds different kinds different kinds. Which kind of tells angling culture in here. Tenkara as I understand it, I don't do it, but I think I used to be called a Japanese style fly-fishing. And now I think tenkara I mean, fly-fishing called a western-style. No, I'm wrong. Wrong. When fly-fishing came into Japan, it was called Western Tenkara. Yeah, that's right. So we learnt, oh, the American fly-fishing is just just like tenkara because we are familiar with tenkara, which is a commercial way of harvesting trout in the most logical way. I think cuz people the commercial fishers didn't have time to collect bait which is unreliable. If the river's up they cannot collect, you know, it's gonna be difficult to dig up the worm from the soil. So they tied the fly, which is, you know, you can make it premake it at home and take it. You can reel it and harvest yamame and iwana and sell them to the to the inn or restaurant. So as long as I can tell, that's that's a very commercial way logical way to harvest fish. Very spot on. Very minimal. They used to use line technique. It's pretty much the same as Western fly-fishing. Used the weight off their line to to deliver the fly, but they used to horsehair like braided just like it's old English style. And I think they used to as a tippet, they used the silkworm gut. Hackle. Maybe a whatever. For the body or stuff they used to use whatever useable and I know that some of the people used to in a vegetable fur like, you know, the fuzz of, you know. I don't know. Whatever is growing close to the river. So that's a very simple way of doing that from almost from almost from a commercial standpoint.

Tomonori Higashi [00:09:23] I was a full time employee here. Now I'm a part timer supporting mainly on the language site and liason work with the organization in Florida. And, you know, International Gamefish Association, it does several things. One is to maintain records of what records, the biggest fish that caught using the special line's size depend on the breaking strength of the line. And they do educate younger generation anglers to prominent sport fishing. And they advocate the ethical angling practices instead of bagging everything. We try to convince people to limit their catch to for the equal or fair distribution of the harvest or resource. And Japan Game Fish Association do similar activities basing on the shared ideals of angling. So what we do mostly is to keep records in here. We manage the Japan records too separate but using the same rule. And we try to convince the fishing fish eating culture in here to towards more sustainable use of resource, like you know. We don't have any regulatory rule to limit our catch. We are behind. But we're trying to convince anglers to employ a self-imposed bag limit like you know. Maybe three is enough for a family, two fish is enough for family? If you kept this one be two fish instead of 10 and distribute others to the other neighbors, that's a silly move. So you try to get really heavily incline on the resource management means I mean awareness or improvement project. So that's that's the (unintelligible) they do mostly. Salt water, no bag limit. And the freshwater rivers, each managed by its own fishery, corps. And they have their own bag limit.

James Thull [00:11:56] All right. Yes. So freshwater seems to be a little more regulated than salt.

Tomonori Higashi [00:11:59] Exactly right. That's right. That's right.

Tomonori Higashi [00:12:09] Fresh water, usually the rivers open on March 1st, closes typically in September the 30th. And the other, is closed season, especially for the, you know, stream fishing. Other species have other opening seasons. Saltwater usually open

anytime. No fishing license fee? None. No bag limit. So that's a little bit scary situation that we are worried about. Talking about the pollution, I think we've seen worse. And I think because of technology and people's awareness and pollution problem is improving. Except for the pollution from the, you know, nuke reactors up in here. I mean, Fukushima, which we have to seriously tackle it. You know, still we don't have any technology to control that. We have to admit we are a big nuisance to the world. So hopefully we can find the technology to clean everything up. But yeah, the pollution, okay. But I'm still worried about the not greed, but the mentality of the Japanese anglers who wants to bag everything, should be corrected. And, you know, tied up with the general attitude of the anglers or the people. You know, the Japanese economy is kind of going still down. They still haven't hit the bottom. It's still kind of struggling. And because of the weak economy, people are getting poorer. But you know what? They want to get their money's worth. The kind of mentality. So when go fishing, when they when they go fishing, they want to get result, direct result, harvest something to eat. And that is in a little bit, you know, worsening the resource situation right now in Japan. And I hope maybe from governmental regulation or maybe us we like we do it, you know, the attitude modification from the anglers side, the resource can be improved a little bit better for the fair distribution of the, you know, useable fishery source, I think. So that's my biggest concern. Climate change, I think I think we're seeing and we are witnessing the different species coming into our waters. But I think the climates change always but we have to try hard not to worsen, accelerate climate change. But my take is we have to live with it. So a good resource and controlled harvest is the a goal that I have. Young anglers, decreasing in numbers thing, we don't see many young anglers picking it up. And I don't know, maybe quite a few factors should be involved. Maybe younger people, we don't have enough disposable income to pick up fishing, which is kind of expensive in a way past time to start and maybe they don't have any motivation to go outdoors. But that's true that the number of anglers, younger anglers, small and my personal goal is to keep practicing the the modern way or rather sustainable way of angling in here so that if younger people pick it up, we can they can learn from the good practices. We see it. So I think it's not a, not effective way of promoting quality angling by reaching out to random people and asking them to pick up fishing. That is that is not economical of moving. So instead of doing that, if I do it, if they show interest in sport fishing, fly fishing. I want to tell, this is the way to do it. And this is a way to practice it. This is the way to practice, catch and release. Prepare a nice set of information, a nice way of apt action so that they can take a short and efficient way to become educated angler. That's that's my take. So you can't lead a horse.

James Thull [00:17:27] Sure. You can lead a horse to water cannot make it drink.

Tomonori Higashi [00:17:30] I can't force them to pick up fishing. So yeah, but we should be prepared. The slowly coming in, I think, in all areas of angling. And they try, I mean, the people in this industry try to attract women into angling. They are somewhat succeeding. I think in general, the female anglers are less than 10 percent of the total population, which is kind of shocking still to me. Yeah, but sport fishing like a block casting or fly fishing, I think the percentage is a little bit high here much in the, you know, ten or maybe eleven, twelve, thirteen percent range, which may be like the US situation.

Tomonori Higashi [00:18:35] You know, the easiest maybe they tend to pick up a computer or cell phone and Google fishing destination. That's a way we're doing one way we're doing it. My best advice is to find at least a retailer or maybe a neighbor who enjoy fishing. For me, the luckily I had a fly fishing store nearby and there's a community of people, you know, people my age, people younger than me, people older than me, the whole spectrum of people who are eager to teach me? So I was lucky enough to practice

this and pick up this and stuff. So I think that's a very interesting way of learning to fly fish and learning to fish. And it's, you know, the interaction with people. That's half of the fun of fishing. Of course, we enjoy interacting with the fish, but people is no different. But that's another that original charm of fishing. So, yeah, try to build up the relationship with the other anglers learn from them and go to the water. That's my advice.

Tomonori Higashi [00:19:55] Well, the people I can think of. The factor, though, that won't make, a good partner for me. Sure, that's great that people who want quick result. You know, hey, I'm practice the casting. Can I catch fish tomorrow? Kind of person difficult to fish with me because I tend to take a long time to improve myself, to, you know, prepare. And we have to enjoy the process, I think, the whole stuff. And slow, gradual improvement I like. And whereby who wants to get a quick gratification? I can't fish with some. I do fish I sometimes think. And I still have yet to come up with my correct answer, but I thought a thought I like, I like to be in the great environment, beautiful environment, clear water and beautiful fish. And then I found out that I still like to fish in muddy waters a little bit polluted water. So. And that made me thinking, I think I like to fish. I mean, to reach for the fish, to reach for the creature that is in a totally different world that we cannot survive, which is the world of the water. And, you know, they're full of mysteries. And our common sense and thinking doesn't necessarily apply to their world. And that keeps me in perspective. And I think that's a good feeling to me, understanding that there are some creatures that's beyond my recognition and imagination. You know, sometimes we think, sometimes we think they know how they think we know how they think. You know, most of the time they are a mystery. Sometimes they show up something that they don't. But, and I like that. So, yeah, the creature and the different world reaching out for them is my love of angling I think. Well, right after college, I majored in American literature and I find a job at local government. Now I quit it and then became a fly fishing writer. I started to write for small local newspaper, small column, maybe 400 letters and maybe I got maybe seven bucks or something for a single piece. Which is a big money. If I write this small piece and the, you know, postcard send it into the newspaper. If they run it, I get seven bucks, which is worth for one lure like heddon lure or Abacus Lure, which is a totally get. So that was start in my writing career. And then I became a contract. But staff writer for fly-fishing publication who just sprung up called Fly Fisher. It started out as a quarterly, then grew into bi-monthy then monthly. It grew and I kind of grow with it. And yeah, I started to go to the state. Go visit the states. Fish with Mel Krieger to Steve Rajeff people like that and sent a report for fly fishing magazine. They liked it. Interviewed quite a few American rod makers. They liked it. So I built a career and then I picked up fly casting mainly because of the Mel Krieger. Who was the icon I think of fly casting. So I translated his casting book and I think that was a bit of a contribution to the fly-fishing in here and became the instructor for the fly casting. So yeah, and pretty much do the same thing I translate. I write, I instruct. The journalism and fly fishing journalism kind of going a little bit down, I think because of the internet is easily shared and obtained through the big archive. But still there is some room I think for the paper media surviving as a luxury media. Sure. And so I like that aspect. So I think I'm determined to pursue it a little bit more. Plus, I'll have quite a few friends in this fly fishing journalism. Maybe you meet some of the people today and they'll keep us motivated. Things like Leeson, Ted Leeson my favorite writer. I Like Russell Chatham, restaurant, writer, Fisher, artists. Yeah, artist is great. And of course, Geirach. It's tough to pass of course with character. Interesting man. Yeah. These three are my favorite today. And of course, you know, if we date back quite a few people, stars. But these three of the current my favorite. Quite a few places I want to go and I still have a little bit of time to be sure. I really never thought about it seriously, but maybe Greenland.

James Thull [00:26:21] And what would fish?

Tomonori Higashi [00:26:25] Char. Arctic char. Yeah. Yeah. You know.

Tomonori Higashi [00:26:28] You know, back to translation. A couple of years ago, I did a big translation project putting in to Japanese the The Diary of Fridtjof Nansen. The Norwegian Explorer. Yeah. Who cross Greenland in 18 something. I forgot the name the exact date. But he crossed Greenland in wintertime on ski. And that's a great expedition. And in translating texts, it was amazing, you know, it's a feat, you know, with no modern equipment. And I think and I really wanted to visit that place first person and hopefully get some fish. Maybe Char.