

TFFCC Chronicles

Earth Day 2016 Special Edition

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River in Shiretoko Peninsula, Hokkaido

"Dear Anglers
Please reconsider fishing in this area where we are protecting fish to feed the creatures of forest. Otherwise, please practice catch & release"
- Owl

Q. Why is this owl speaking to anglers?

Q. What owl is he?

Q. Why he let anglers do catch & release fishing?

Biodiversity, Catch & Release, and Catch Limit

There is a self propelled practice of "catch & release" in all fishing including fly fishing. This isn't a new concept and something practiced since ancient time to release small fishes egg bearing fishes that are going to form next generation of colony. There is also a practice of "no catch season" to keep all harms away from spawning fishes or to protect particular colony with declining population. All to keep fishery sustainable.

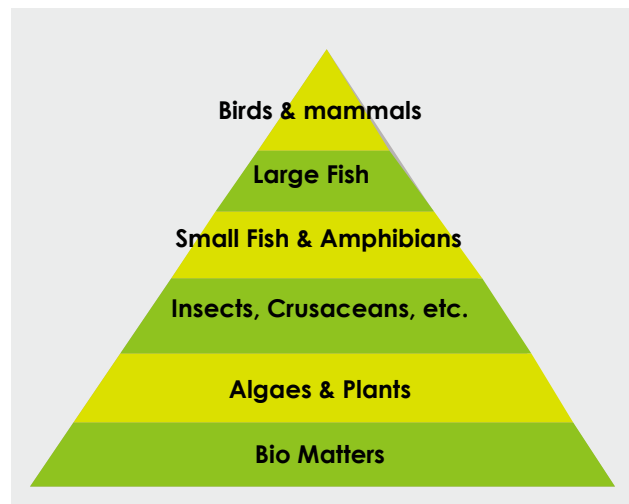
Why? From the perspective of human society, if particular species of fish disappear from one water system, it will deplete the haul of that local fishing operation leading to economic destruction. From the perspective of entire eco system, taking out a colony of species immediately diminishes supply of organic matter to that water in form of excreta or carcasses that are needed to grow algae and aquatic plants which feed or provide shelter for aquatic lifeforms which fishes are previously feeding on. Loss of fish means loss of plants and other lifeforms, therefore, once the cycle is lost, it won't regain its former status with or without stocking new colony of fish into that water system.

Also, it isn't only humans needing that colony of fish. There are birds and mammals living in the same system who will starve without being able to access equal amount of nutrition. Some maybe able to migrate and find new home. But some will surely become extinct.

Commercial Fishing

Haul from fishing has been declining in Japan for over 2 decades. Loss of hauls are driving some corporations to use round haul net that doesn't let go essential fish needed to form next generation and they are also moving to other species of fish they have previously ignored. This is speeding up the loss of fish population in Japanese water and now becoming international problem.

Agency of Fishery says they are setting scientifically proven "TAC (Total Allowable Catch)" to control the haul of fish, which is nothing more than a rhetoric to let large corporations exploit the resource while TAC sets more than double of what's been actually hauled. For instance, between January and December of last year, jack mackerel TAC was 270 kilo tons while actual haul was only 5 kilo

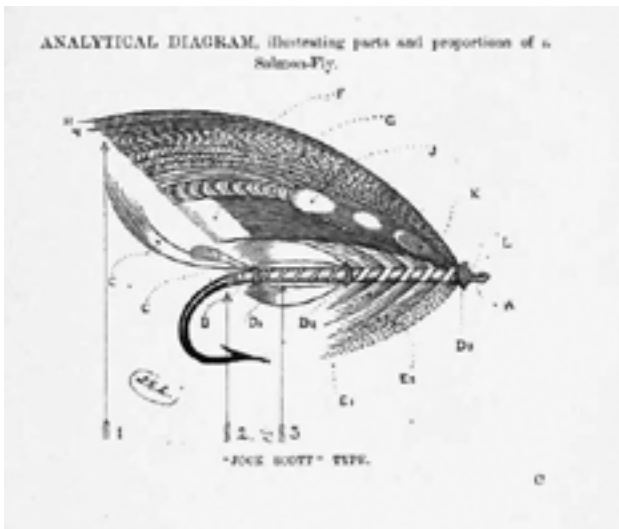


ton. This lack of control is pressuring both colony of fishes and small fishing operation who can only catch what's left of large corporations.

Recreational Fishing

Less than 1% of haul is coming from recreational fishing which may appear "benign" to someone with quick conclusion. However, these 1% are hauled from colony of fish escaping massive commercial fishing and they are coming from water system relatively closer to human activities. They are already under pressure and their colony may be our last chance we have to sustain our fishing. That is why proper "catch & release" is more important than ever.





Fly Fishing

Fly fishing is a sport that use rod, reel, and weighted line to cast the fly to target fish. Fly is imitation of what fish is eating or stimulates fish hard enough so that fish strikes it with its mouth. Therefore specific fly patterns are required to attain expected counter action from fish. In most of cases, fly is tied on single hook with environmentally low impact material. Also, fly fishing today is promoting to use barbless hook to lower the damage on fish while protecting anglers from injury.

Fly fishing is a slow cycle to catch one fish and promotes "catch & release" to maintain the population of fish in the fishery. Being slow is very important. Angler is forced to spend long period of time inside the surrounding nature which makes you learn how to behave in the water world. Better you behave, more you learn, better anglers you will become, more fish you can catch.

That said, fly fisher is after all invasive species to that water world. However, because we spend time with careful observation, we have chance to find the sign of environmental issue and have enough intelligence to send message to our society.

3 Simple Yet Important Questions



Upon this year's Earth Day, TFFCC asked members and friends 3 questions. First person to answer all was David Carr from Hawaii who happens to start fly fishing only one year ago!

1) How fly fishing make you learn about environment?

David:

Relative to any other type of fishing that I have done, flyfishing certainly requires more knowledge and environmental awareness. From knowing my target species' typical forage, and "matching the hatch", to carefully tracking and adjusting my approach according to the season, tide, moon phase, recent weather, human pressure, etc. Quite a divergence from the past time of pulling up a lawn chair at the lake, cold beer in hand, wriggling worm on the end of the line, in the hopes that something, (anything) might bite. The contrast is night and day. The precision and macro thinking required to flyfish productively leads one to consider larger issues. Are the intended target fish native, stocked, or invasive? Might they be edible, toxic, or threatened in some way? What is the health of the river in which we are wading? Some waters are contaminated and

need to be entered with added caution, or avoided altogether. Litter strewn about is unsightly and disheartening. When fishing a stretch of river a fly fisher should take ownership and responsibility for its condition. "Leave it better than you found it" is an ironclad rule of thumb. We should all endeavor to be good stewards of the waters we fish.

2) What does Catch & Release fishing mean to you?

David:

Fishing has long been a personal passion. The many aspects are intriguing. From all of the fancy gear and prep, to stalking prey and inducing a bite. Occasionally, with larger species the physically demanding battle. Fly Fishing in particular can be undertaken in a way as to become a deeply satisfying and all encompassing, if visceral art/sport/lifestyle. That said I personally find no particular joy in putting beautiful creatures to death, nor seeing them suffer needlessly. Harvesting food from the ocean or lake is fine, but as matter of course, should always be done mindfully, and sustainably. There is absolutely nothing wrong with bringing home a fresh mahi or fat salmon for dinner. Rather, there is a righteous beauty in providing sustenance for oneself and family. On the day to day my target fishes often consist of inedible or culinarily undesirable species. Regardless, I find it imperative that great respect be given to the sentient creatures with whom we "play this game" of flyfishing. For example, we should be mindful not to "overplay" a fish into lethal exhaustion, to carefully land, and assess while admiring that particular fishes condition and beauty. Perhaps snap a quick photo, or tag, and gently & expediently release our catch to ensure the highest chance of recovery from any trauma we may have inflicted. Releasing a fish, and watching him swim away unharmed is easily as, or more satisfying than the challenge of capturing him.

3) How can we make amends to the nature from which we take some much?

David :

It is no secret that the planet is not entirely well.. To some degree each and everyone of us is to blame for this. Our modern lifestyle has smogged the skies, acidified the seas, dammed rivers, concreted shorelines, and strewn plastic just about everywhere. The damage is immense and undeniable. Any one person's attempts toward positively impacting, much less reversing this travesty may seem futile indeed. However the manner in which we conduct ourselves on the water; minute things such as but not limited to: pocketing bits of snipped line, not leaving garbage behind, brushing the seeds from our boots between outings (as not to spread invasive species) etc. All of these tiny measures may add up only modestly, but they indeed set a tone. Mindful acts of concern positively affect our consciousness and in fact may be contagious. We should all take personal responsibility for, and display good stewardship of the waters we fish. As fishermen who's leisure enjoyment, supper, and perhaps livelihood depends on healthy waterways, it's the very least we can do to express our gratitude.

Please take time to ask the same question to yourself. If you need to talk about it, please come to our Facebook Group "Tokyo Fly Fishing & Country Club".

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Want to learn more about this club?

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