

International Language of Fly Fishing

Jack Harford
April 22, 2016



Sometimes when visiting another country it is easy to feel uncomfortable or out of place. In South Korea, people speak a different language and there are many cultural differences. Seoul has exploded into a massive city of more than 11 million all crammed into an area 2/3 the size of Marion County which has around 850,000 inhabitants. So the population density is about 13 times that of Indy. There are hundreds, maybe thousands of garish 15-30 story apartment buildings dominating the skyline to accommodate all those people. For a small town guy that grew up in Delphi it didn't seem much like home.

Yet in the midst of this metropolis, down a small side street in Yongsan, tucked into the back corner of a small commercial building is River Fly Fishing Tackle. Mr. Cho is the owner of this small establishment which is about 10 feet wide and maybe 25 feet long. My son-in-law, Hyun Ho and I sat down with Mr. Cho who speaks enough English for me to understand without much extra effort. Within a few minutes he made us feel quite at home talking about fly fishing, showing off our flies (just happened to have a box with me), and discussing angling opportunities in South Korea. Mr. Cho pulled up some of his fish pictures and I was amazed at the size of some of the rainbows he had caught and the beauty of the native cherry trout.

Through the international language of fly fishing it quickly felt like we were longtime friends. At one point, Mr. Cho got serious and started speaking in Korean to Hyun Ho. Later I found out that he was trying to convert Hyun Ho from the evil ways of hardware and boat fishing to the elegant sport of fly angling. It was fun to see his eyes light up and the passion in his voice as he talked about our much beloved sport. Truly, fly fishing has its own language and culture that transcend any borders or other barriers.

Toward the back of the shop is a rack of Cho's handmade bamboo fly rods. These beautiful bamboo rods go for 800,000 won and up (about \$650 at the current exchange rate). His website is in Korean only at www.riverfly.net.