

## **The Yugawa River and the Father of Fly-Fishing in Japan**

The Yugawa River winds its way through the heart of Okunikko. It originates at the base of Yudaki Falls, meanders through the Senjogahara Marshland, and empties into Lake Chuzenji some 12.4 kilometers from its source. The river is best known as the birthplace of fly-fishing in Japan, thanks to the efforts of Thomas Blake Glover (1838–1911), a prominent Scottish merchant who played an important role in the Meiji Restoration after 1868. Glover was among the foreigners who were drawn to Nikko as a summer getaway, building a lodge on the shore of Lake Chuzenji in 1893. He was an avid fly-fisherman, and perhaps the Yugawa River reminded him of the streams near his home in Scotland.

At that time, the rivers and lakes of Nikko had long been devoid of fish. The massive height of Kegon Falls acted as a barrier to migration, and releasing fish was banned as Lake Chuzenji was considered sacred. In 1902, Glover received permission to import some 25,000 brook trout eggs from Colorado and release the hatched fry into the Yugawa River. Though a typhoon killed the first batch, the population from a second release thrived, and the river became a favorite fly-fishing spot for the foreign dignitaries and businessmen who built summer homes in Nikko. The river, along with Lake Yunoko, was later administered as an imperial household property. Today, thanks to a catch-and-release restriction over its entire length, the Yugawa remains one of the premier fly-fishing spots in the country for brook and rainbow trout.