Koji Yaoita has an eye for New Hampshire.

The 40-year-old artist, who lives in Chiba, Japan (a suburb of Tokyo), has visited New Hampshire regularly since 1993 to fish, explore, take photos and capture the essence for his canvas back in Japan.

Yaoita discovered fishing when he was 8 years old, worm and bobber fishing for small carp in drainage creeks that flood rice paddies.

Always drawn to art, Yaoita graduated from Nihon Design Art College in 1982. While in school, his work was exhibited at the prestigious Tokyo Art Gallery.

Yaoita soon took a job with a graphic design office in Tokyo. While there, Yaoita realized that there was little demand for the kind of art he was interested in. So, he left the design office to pursue his passion of painting scenes of fishing, wildlife and nature.

As a freelance illustrator, Yaoita quickly became one of Japan’s top five fishing illustrators. His works have appeared in many publications, including the cover of Tackle Box, a popular Japanese magazine about bass fishing. Yaoita has also illustrated the posters for the 1995 and 1996 Tokyo International Fishing Shows.

Yaoita’s illustrations have also appeared in the Japanese
Hampshire
magazine *Fly Rodder* and have been featured at the “Fly-Fishing Hand Craft Show 2002” in Tokyo.

Yaoita is now the primary freelance illustrator for the leading fishing tackle manufacturer in Japan, the Daiwa Corp.

**Fishing the World**

Yaoita has traveled and fished in many exciting places, including Wyoming, Alaska, Minnesota and Canada. All of these places were nice, but they were missing something for Yaoita.

At a fly-fishing show in Tokyo in 1993, Yaoita met Angus Boezeman, a fly-fishing guide from New Hampshire, who is fluent in Japanese. They talked about the fishing opportunities in New Hampshire, and Yaoita took Boezeman’s card and walked away. Something told him to look at his card again. This chance meeting was an act of fate, he thought.

Yaoita’s first trip was a memorable one. He and Boezeman paid a visit to the American Museum of Fly Fishing in Vermont, and then they were on to Pittsburg to fish the Connecticut River. They camped at Lafayette State Park in Franconia and also fished the Newfound River.

Koji still remembers the nice brown trout he and Angus caught on the Contoocook River.

As their tour of New Hampshire continued, their friendship grew stronger, as did Yaoita’s appreciation for the state and its fishing.

Yaoita had found what he was looking for. “I found my utopia,” he says. “New Hampshire has the nicest forests, lakes, rivers, scenery, fish...as well as nice friends.”

**Details of The Great Outdoors**

Yaoita had found in New Hampshire the elements of his artistic philosophy. The people of Japan have a strong respect for friends, history, culture and natural resources. He captures all of them in his artistic view of New Hampshire.

His yearly visits are filled with fishing and sightseeing. Because Yaoita’s time is short in New Hampshire, he makes good use of his time by photographing the background material needed for his paintings. “I would love to be able to sketch while I’m here in New Hampshire,” Yaoita says, “but I don’t want to miss...
Yaoita’s trips to New Hampshire are part of what he calls his “journey to philosophy.” Like others before him leaving their music, literature, photos and fly patterns, Yaoita leaves his painting, capturing his unique views of New Hampshire.

He’ll continue visiting New Hampshire and his friends here, and he’ll keep creating wonderful works of art that interpret his vision, philosophy, passion for fishing, friendships and love for New Hampshire.

“I want to represent these thoughts; and if you can feel this through my work, it makes me very happy,” Yaoita says.

Knowing Yaoita personally, I truly understand what makes him happy. I’ve had the pleasure of fishing with Yaoita and have seen New Hampshire through his eyes. He finds beauty in things that I have grown accustomed to seeing.

“When I’m there,” Yaoita says, “I can feel that I’m back to the place where I should really stay.”

Mark Beauchesne is coordinator of Fish and Game’s Let’s Go Fishing program and is also a registered fishing guide.

Limited-edition prints of Koji Yaoita’s artwork are available in the U.S. through Angus Boezeman. Contact Angus c/o Pip Printing, 30 ½ South Main Street, Concord, NH 03301; or phone (603) 225-7363.
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