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# NISHIKIGOI MONDO



Edited by **INPC**

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## A message from Hajime Isa

### **Hajime Isa**

Chairman of INPC

In the fearful earthquake that happened in 2004, we lost oyagoi and ponds that we used to make a living. The Nishikigoi farms were placed in a serious crisis. The following year we established the International Nishikigoi Promotion Center (INPC) to support Niigata Nishikigoi breeders. Whilst the organization hasn't been running for a long time we have accumulated our efforts carefully one by one and aim to play a role as a silent force behind the scenes and build trustable relationships among the breeders and hobbyists.

That is why we are publishing “Nishikigoi Mondo”, a long waited book that has rich content which is reliable for amateurs and even for breeders. I suppose that one reason this book is more important than any other Nishikigoi books that have been published is because it includes both early and recent information on Nishikigoi due to the more than 40 years experience of Shuji Fujita, editor in chief of Rinko magazine.

Nishikigoi accidentally emerged due to the interactive relationship between snowy, closed situation of Niigata and the mutation of edible carp. I hope “Nishikigoi Mondo” will become the complete subject book for Nishikigoi hobbyists and spread knowledge about both Nishikigoi, and Niigata, across the world.



## A message from Senichi Mano

### **Senichi Mano**

Chairman of board of Directors  
All Japan Nishikigoi Promotion Association

Niigata suffered catastrophic damage from the earthquake in 2004. In the middle of the crisis we were gladdened at receiving warm support from Nishikigoi hobbyists and associations around the world and also realized how much Niigata Nishikigoi are loved and respected overseas. Because of the kindness of people we could have been reconstructed close to 100% today.

The publication of “Nishikigoi Mondo” in English is a wonderful thing. Since there are many people who are interested in Nishikigoi, I would like them to read this quality Nishikigoi book including their history, how to keep them, how to deal with fish diseases all in an easy to follow form of questions and answers.

Furthermore, as it stated in this book, Nishikigoi are very friendly fish that easily accept new companions. We have hope that human being can learn from Nishikigoi to gain a peaceful mind instead of fighting against each other through this book.

I hope that hobbyists who improve their knowledge by reading “Nishikigoi Mondo” decide to visit Niigata the origin of Nishikigoi and also the biggest Nishikigoi industry in the world.



## A message from Hisashi Hirasawa

### **Hisashi Hirasawa**

Niigata Regional Director  
All Japan Nishikigoi Promotion Association

Once upon a Niigata, it was a mountain area closed in winter by heavy snowfall. During winter the residents usually stayed at home and there was no entertainment.

However friends would sometimes get together at someone's house to talk about this and that, especially they had fun boasting about their sudden given gift, Irogoi (an old name for Nishikigoi). Nishikigoi became one of the few entertainments for our ancestors. People started breeding the Koi to create something interesting to talk about and that led to the Nishikigoi industry that now exists.

Recently Niigata Koi farms were devastated by earthquake and troubled by the threat of KHV infections. We have been supported by many people who love Nishikigoi and have put effort into reconstructing this area. That is why we are able to be here breeding Nishikigoi today. I'm so delighted we are able to do so.

Meanwhile we are looking forward to "Nishikigoi Mondo" helping hobbyists to build their knowledge. Some of our members participated in making this book which we are proud of. The book contains the experiences of many professionals. I would like people to read through this book and become more interested in both Nishikigoi and Niigata.

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The photograph on the back cover  
Kasuien Minami (Shimane Prefecture)



## A message from Shuji Fujita - co author of Nishikigoi Mondo

### **Shuji Fujita**

Editor in chief of "Rinko" magazine

‘He who knows does not care to speak about it; he who speaks about it does not know it.’

As in the proverb stated above, Nishikigoi breeders don't talk about the techniques and their experience of raising Nishikigoi much, they just do it. Breeders don't need to speak because their Nishikigoi, their product, says everything for them.

Breeders start with selecting oyagoi for spawning and, thereafter, it takes several years of culling and careful raising in mud ponds to create only one beautiful Nishikigoi. The process of producing one superior Nishikigoi needs much technical knowledge in areas such as ecology, physiology, genealogy, nutrition, as well as understanding the aesthetic beauty of Nishikigoi. Some breeders are never truly satisfied with the Nishikigoi which they produce throughout their lives. Each breeder has their own beliefs and own vision about what they wish to create. At the same time they develop their own way of speaking about Nishikigoi and, whilst different breeders may use terms that sound the same, they may have vaguely different meanings. It is easy to understand how hobbyists struggle with such terms.

My first involvement with Nishikigoi was in 1964, the same year as the Tokyo Olympics. I visited Dr Kuroki, who planned to publish a book on Nishikigoi, and I was amazed by his real Nishikigoi pond located at his house. I had seen a Nishikigoi pond in a park somewhere, and the corner of the booklet of the Niigata Grand Hotel, so I knew what they were like. However, the Nishikigoi swimming in the pond at Dr Kuroki's house attracted me more than any other Nishikigoi I had seen. That day I realized the beauty of Nishikigoi.

At his home I read his writings carefully and noted the classifications of different Nishikigoi varieties. Those notes would later become the basis of information we published. My staff and I started to research Nishikigoi and, when we learned something new about Nishikigoi from relevant people, we always recorded the details on loose leaf paper. On average we must have drafted 1 page of notes per day to create the over 10000 pages that I now have. Plenty of the information remained unreleased and, whilst we knew it was better published, we hesitated to do so due to a lack of understanding of the Nishikigoi ‘breeders talk’ I mentioned. Ultimately, we came up with the idea that extracts the essential parts of the information and puts them into an advanced beginner’s Nishikigoi book. However, who would buy this kind of book?

Fortunately the number of Nishikigoi hobbyists in various countries is increasing nowadays. I hope this book will contribute to spreading the hobby of Nishikigoi all over the world and become the best available reference for hobbyists. Nishikigoi Mondo aims to answer the questions anticipated from emerging beginners and intermediate hobbyists. After the questions and answers were drafted, we noticed that each topic stemmed from interviews with a specific person and, as such, we decided to interview them once again to ensure no detail was missed. Mondo contains over 40 years of constant research on Nishikigoi by us, Shin Nippon Kyoiku Tosho, and took 3 years to finally accomplish. We attempt to play a role as an interpreter between hobbyists and breeders.

Over the years we have seen many Nishikigoi experts, some of the wise have unfortunately passed away, making it difficult to contact everyone who'd participated in our research. We asked current day experts to confirm the contents in this book. Most of editorial supervisors, including myself, have been involved with the Nishikigoi world over the same period. These faces are too developed; in other words, they are filled with wisdom and knowledge. I would like to thank all the people who have been involved with Nishikigoi Mondo for their support and assistance. Also, I would like to show respect on the late Dr Kuroki, the former chairman of ZNA, who spent his life trying to introduce Japanese Nishikigoi culture all over the world. I hope Nishikigoi will be loved and appreciated by the readers of Nishikigoi Mondo as was his desire.

*Shuji Fujita*

## Prologue

# Interview with Shoichi Iizuka

**Shuji Fujita:** What would you consider the enjoyment of the Nishikigoi hobby?

**Shoichi Iizuka:** I consider that Nishikigoi enrich the owner's spirit because they respond to the daily caring of the owner with their beauty. When a Nishikigoi becomes more beautiful than the owner expected, he or she can be excited at the anticipation of winning a prize at a Nishikigoi show. Even though the hobbyist may not win a prize, the loss may encourage them to further improve the Nishikigoi. I believe that Nishikigoi attract hobbyists for a long time.

**F:** Is the beauty of Nishikigoi artificial or natural?

**I:** Nishikigoi emerged by mutation originally and then farmers in Niigata started to intentionally breed them. Nishikigoi were inbred and outbred over and over again, over many years, in order to stabilize bloodlines and produce new varieties. For example Kohaku, originally known as Sarasa were Nishikigoi variety in the middle of Meiji era, since then it took 120 years to establish the current beauty of Kohaku. During

the development, several superior brands of Kohaku have been produced.

**F:** What are some of the superior Kohaku brands that have been made?

**I:** Genpachi Kohaku, Tsuneshichi Kohaku, and Tomoin Kohaku are all famous Kohaku brands, which succeeded to the Sensuke Kohaku lineage of Niigata. Iizuka Kohaku is a brand that inherited the Sensuke line.

**F:** Do only lineages determine the quality of Nishikigoi?

**I:** Nishikigoi are a living organism, so they are affected by the procedure of keeping them. Nishikigoi with high potential can turn into horrible condition unless the owner gives them adequate care. The modern brands of Nishikigoi contain superior

genes, so it is possible to grow beautiful Nishikigoi with proper treatment.

**F:** Nishikigoi is recognized as a peasant art of Niigata, but there is also the impression of it being an expensive hobby. How do you think that the difference of understanding regarding Nishikigoi occurred?





**I:** I suppose that art and technology would not develop without an affluent society. Throughout history, wealthy people have contributed to the development of creations by amazing artists. It is same for Nishikigoi industry. Nishikigoi are the one of the traditional arts in Japan that has life. I consider that the affluent society builds the spirit for enjoying culture, and the Nishikigoi industry works because of the hobbyist's love of appreciating Nishikigoi.

**F:** I agree that art cannot be improved without sponsors. The rich hobbyists spend money to contribute to the creation of beautiful Nishikigoi and prompt the wealth redistribution in society. Could you explain the industrial structure and market of Nishikigoi?

**I:** Although the scale of the industry is small, it is clearly structured to accomplish the

process of breeding Nishikigoi. The process including raising, appreciating, treating diseases, spawning, and culling needs knowledge and experience to succeed. Many Nishikigoi breeders wish to produce beautiful Nishikigoi that make Nishikigoi lovers happy. The breeders compete and cooperate to create the greatest Nishikigoi in the world. Unfortunately, some breeders never manage to create the Nishikigoi with which they are truly satisfied. Whether amateurs or experts, there are some who are so obsessed with Nishikigoi they cannot be apart from them. I know some amateurs that have made a career change to become Nishikigoi distributors, and others that have professional skill of spawning and culling. These people enjoy the Nishikigoi hobby at an acceptable level of expense.

**F:** Nishikigoi is regarded as a king of or-



namental fish. It is also said that Koi is the king of fish in 'Shinnoukyo', an old Chinese document. Do you think that Nishikigoi is prohibitively expensive for middle class people?

**I:** Anyone can purchase and keep Nishikigoi. They can be raised in a small space, and the person who experiences the process of raising the fish since they were babies can enjoy this interesting part of nature and understand the importance of life. We even plan to involve Nishikigoi in school education and teach the next generation the operation of nature and appreciation of beauty through Nishikigoi.

**F:** How is the Nishikigoi business going in Japan?

**I:** After the extreme boom of Nishikigoi around the 50th year of Showa era passed through, the hobby of Nishikigoi is stable

as a popular one all over the world. Since we would like more people to enjoy them, we have been enthusiastically promoting the value of Nishikigoi. Naoki Sugiura, a koikichi among actors, constantly says that Nishikigoi is Japanese culture. Culture commonly builds in peace, Nishikigoi culture first occurred at the end of Edo era in Niigata and still flourishes today.

**F:** As you know, Nishikigoi have become a popular hobby through the world now. Do you think that this can continue in the future?

**I:** I believe so. Most of the Nishikigoi breeders in Niigata depend 80% on export. Nishikigoi culture has spread to the world, and the business established in other countries. This ornamental fish has become both a Japanese and an overseas hobby.