

See my list on Trout
1982 & 89
p.30

ALBERTA STREAMS; MICROPATTERNS; MASTERCLASS FLIES

Martin's Micropatterns

Micropatterns by Darrel Martin. Lyons & Burford, 31 West 21 Street, New York, NY 10010, (212) 620-9580, 1994, 306 pages, \$40 hardcover.

SMALL INSECTS HAVE ALWAYS been around, but considering the full sweep of fly-fishing history, tiny flies to imitate them are a recent phenomenon. Even though visionaries such as Marinaro proved their efficiency, if not necessity, I would bet most fly fishers still resist venturing smaller than a #16. However, those wishing to extend the season, solve different spring-creek problems, or simply take advantage of every available hatch must be prepared to imitate gnats, and properly present the flies. Enter Darrel Martin.

Martin has been described as eclectic, and with cause. His penchant for researching tangential subjects surfaced in his first book, *Fly Tying Methods*, with a detailed examination of aquatic weeds. In *Micropatterns*, Martin reinforces his reputation with a 25-page chapter (and a 15-page appendix of graphs) concerning hook strength. Possibly interesting if well done, but it's not. Having more than 30 years experience with the strength and failure mechanisms of metals, I cringed at the numerous confusions and errors.

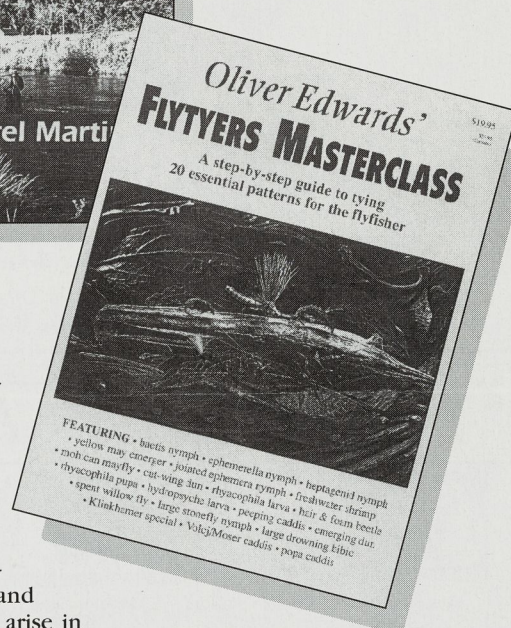
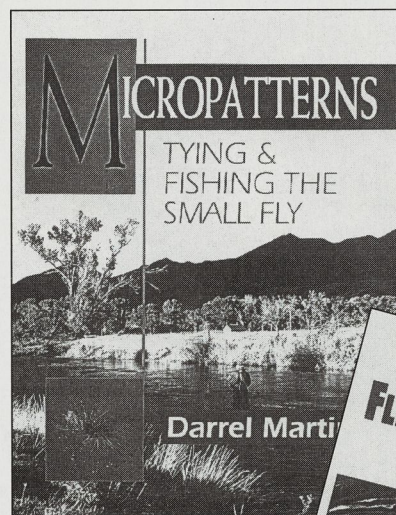
To be fair, Martin makes one very astute hook observation that is overlooked elsewhere. He writes, "It is advisable to select hooks with medium or heavy wire for all patterns under size 20, even dry-fly patterns. Hook performance countervails the minor weight increase." He and I concur that oversize eyes are likewise very desirable.

Now to the subjects in which Martin excels. He begins with the insects,

describing and illustrating in considerable detail the various families, genera, and species of aquatic insects which require a hook size of #18 or smaller for accurate imitation. The small mayflies Baetidae, Caenidae, and Tricorythidae will be familiar; conversely, Hydroptilidae and Glossosomatidae are unlikely to arise in the conversations of even dedicated fly fishers. Nonetheless, the best trout of a trip may be selecting these microcaddis.

I belong to a group of many thousands of fly fishermen who are wavelength discrimination challenged (color blind for the politically incorrect). My future as a fly fisher seemed terribly insecure in the light of Martin's early and extended argument that trout are not only sensitive to hue (the color name) but also value (brightness) and chroma (strength of hue). Thankfully, several chapters later, he restored hope by agreeing that in order of importance to trout, color follows presentation, size, and silhouette.

A substantial chapter on materials provides much interesting information and features some revealing photographs of common fly-tying fibers. The considerable emphasis on Cul-de-Canard (CDC) is well placed. This recently popularized feather, with its fine structure and excellent flotation qualities, is perfect for micropatterns.



Seventeen of the 48 recommended patterns in the following chapter include CDC.

And what of the patterns? The author sensibly realizes that imitations tied on tiny hooks must be simple, and most of the suggestions adhere to that principle. There is a balanced mix of traditional (soft hackles, Pheasant Tail, Grey Goose) and modern (Nymmerger, Unec Midge, Patkova Krem Pupa), nymphs and dries, domestics and foreign born. The recipes and directions are quite clear, although illustrations would have been helpful to support the few complicated dressings.

Once an angler is aware of the likely hatches and armed with seductive imitations, he requires appropriate tackle for presentation. Martin emphasizes the reel, since "a smooth reel with adjustable drag may be the most important tool for landing large fish on small hooks." Equally essential is leader-




Continued on page 42



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 EXTENSION-BUTTS GREEN = 4 kg / 9 lbs BROWN = 10 kg / 20 lbs BLACK = 14 kg / 30 lbs	 BUTTERFLY & BOB STRIKE-INDICATOR	 PIKE-SINKING & TRACE # 11 ft / # 1.0 kg / 20 lbs	 SALMON-STEELHEAD-SEATROUT GREASED-LINE 12 ft / # 12 kg / 24 lbs	 SALMON-STEELHEAD-SEATROUT DEEP-WATER DIVER 12 ft / # 12 kg / 24 lbs

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BOOKSHELF . . .

Continued from page 41

matching, and the tackle chapter provides several useful suggestions. In addition, the author introduces furred leaders, for which he claims many presentation benefits, and illustrates their construction.

Chapter 8 speaks to hatch locations, riseforms, and approaches to difficult trout. A compilation of known, but heretofore scattered, tactics and useful observations is a contribution to overcoming frustrating refusals. In the penultimate chapter, topics such as drag, the downstream drift, and line handling highlight presentation problems and solutions. Herein Martin includes a two-part section with suggestions for fighting and landing large trout on small flies and some thoughtful tips for effective catch-and-release.

Micropatterns needed an editor and proofreader, but in content, except as previously noted, it exceeds the stated goal of offering, "... productive patterns, effective methods, and greater knowledge." An ever inquiring mind and experiences on spring creeks and chalkstreams in North America and Europe have helped Darrel Martin bridge the chasm between theory and the reality of large trout selecting tiny flies in challenging waters.

PAUL MARRINER

Edwards' Masterclass

Oliver Edwards' Flytyers Masterclass by Oliver Edwards. Stoeger Publishing Company, 55 Ruta Court, South Hackensack, NJ 07606, 1994, 246 pages, \$19.95 softcover.

FLY TYING HAS ALWAYS been an international activity, but until recently changes were often slow to leap the barriers of oceans or language. With the advent of international fly-tying symposia, fly fairs, and improved access for fly tiers to publishers and videos, the very desirable cross-fertilization of ideas has become rapid. *Masterclass* is a quintessential example of this reality with virtually simultaneous editions in Britain and North America and a rapidly developing distribution in Europe.

Once, on foreign shores, I had the opportunity to study the contents of Oliver Edwards' fly boxes. "So what?" you ask. Well it established for me that his patterns aren't just for show; and he uses them with skill.

Masterclass presents 20 pattern designs. Thankfully, Edwards wastes no space with topics such as tools, materials, or basic tying techniques; this is, after all, a "masterclass." The sole digression from the core purpose is a very useful worldwide list of shops that carry his

dupes

Insert on p. 18

There is an old debate over soft-hackle tactics. One school holds that supple hackle^s work best when fished upstream, or at any rate drag-free. When cast downstream and pulled against the current, soft feathers tend to mat and lie close against the hook, losing some of their action and masking the body. On this reasoning, my own practice is to switch over to stiff hackles when I want to fish a wet fly downstream. There is, however, another school which believes that soft-hackle flies fished downstream imitate slender nymphs. Sylvester Nemes emphasizes downstream methods for soft-hackle flies, so I may have been missing something.

Footnote to p. 190

* Note to the second edition: Since writing the above passage for the first^t edition, I have read The Trout And The Fly, by Brian Clarke and John Goddard. It is an important book and one I like very much. The authors recommend an upside-down design identical to Janssen's, and this is one of very few points on which I cannot agree with them.

Insert A -- p. 194

The Barb-Wing Dun and Two No-Hackles "No-hackle" flies have, for good reason, become popular. They make excellent representations of small mayfly duns, and they use no expensive materials or difficult tying techniques. These designs are difficult to overdress; an exaggerated wing helps them. Flies tied with quill or hair wings have, however, a few disadvantages noted below, and these prompted me to work out the Barb-Wing. It cannot logically be called a "no hackle" fly, because it starts with an inexpensive hackle. When finished, however, the Barb-Wing is almost identical (in design terms) to the hair-winged no-hackle fly.

Please note here that a hackle barb is exactly the same thing as a hackle fiber. I chose the shorter term because, in addition to saving a syllable, it is more specific. ^{I+} ~~A hackle barb~~ should not, of course, be confused with the barb on a hook. Some writers have ~~xxxxx~~ referred to "hackle barbules," but ~~that is incorrect.~~ The right term is "barb," [^] ~~even if it isn't long enough to sound dignified.~~

Insert B -- p. 194

4 The Barb-Wing was inspired by Roger Woolley's flies, which ^{in their day} became popular because they avoided the problems of quill wings. (Angling ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ repeats it cycles as fast as other human endeavors.) As far as I know, however, Woolley always used the clumped-hackle wing at the head of the fly and added a second hackle that was left full-circle. In effect, Woolley's fly was a traditional hackle that is wound and design with an improved wing. The Barb-Wing uses a single ^{clumped} ~~xxxxxx~~ well back from the eye, thorax-fashion.

(Soft and flexible)

- Hooks extremely well (because all materials are)
- Fairly durable, though not as good in this respect as plain hackle flies

Disadvantages

- More difficult to tie than standard designs, since some care must be taken to get the wings and hackle set right (easier than patterns using clipped wings, however)
- Hook-point not concealed

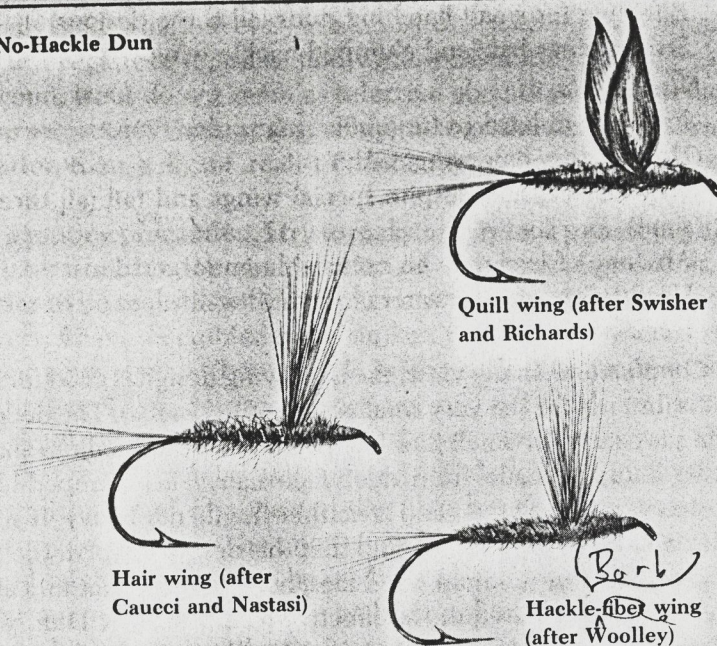
Conclusions You will have to try this one and let me know whether or not my liking for it is sheer bias. Commercial tyers would probably have to charge more for it than for standard designs, but the good ones could afford to get it right. Please note that I do not look on this as any sort of all-purpose fly (the plain hackle design comes much closer to that) but as a very good one during a selective rise to duns, medium-sized duns. For the smallest duns, see the next section.

Three Duns Without Hackles Two of these designs have recently become popular in America, with some reason. They use no expensive materials and can be tied very quickly. Small hackles are not needed. These designs are almost impossible to overdress; an exaggerated wing does no harm. Commercial fly-tyers love them. And even mediocre shop-tied flies in these designs are effective for small hatching duns.

Origin Flies tied only with wings are the most obvious of all designs, and probably the oldest. The Spanish rely on them. The Gold-Ribbed Hare's Ear has long been valued as a no-hackle dry fly. In America, the recent surge in popularity of no-hackle flies began with the work of Swisher and Richards. Their flies are tied with traditional quill wings. Slightly later, Caucci and Nastasi advocated a no-hackle fly with deer-hair wings. I prefer a third design using the old Roger Woolley wing, but have not heard of anyone else using this in a no-hackle version. Maybe it's my design. Woolley, as far as I know, used the clumped-hackle wing together with a second, normally wound, feather.

Tying Notes Since these designs have no normal hackle, they depend for balance mainly upon a wing that is tied in a pronounced V shape; the wing should originate low on the sides of the

No-Hackle Dun



fly, not on the top. Swisher and Richards point out that this wedges the fly upright in the water. With quill wings, this V shape is not easy to achieve without splitting. Swisher and Richards now advocate the old-fashioned double quill wing to give more bulk after the wing splits (which it quickly does in fishing). Using deer hair, it is easier to achieve the correct V, but deer face hair floats badly, while deer body hair is coarse. The Woolley method gives a wing that is both light, durable, and easy to make, as follows: simply wind a cheap, oversized hackle on the hook, tie it off in the normal way, and then secure it in an upright V clump by figure-eight turns of the tying silk. The V should expand to about 90°.

All of these no-hackle designs also profit from a wide-spread tail for additional balance. Swisher and Richards tie it around a ball of dubbing; I prefer to tie the tail in first and secure it open with dubbed thread later.

Advantages

- Simple, cheap, and fast to tie (all three designs)

Insert -- p. 195

The resulting fly is ~~fairly~~ durable and attractive to fish. There is, however, one problem inherent in deer hair: it runs from about .005" to .016" in diameter. The finest diameters (such as those from the deer's mask) are too heavy to float well. The thicker hair does float, because it is hollow. At this point, however, keep in mind that stiffness increases with the fourth power of diameter. Any deer hair is going to be much stiffer than hackle barbs, which run only about .002" in diameter. The hackle, clearly, is going to collapse more easily in the trout's mouth. Hackles also have more sheen than deer hair, are available in more natural colors, and are even more durable.

The Barb-Wing is easier to tie than the quill-wing and as easy as the hair-wing. Simply

Insert on p. 210

Clipped deer-hair is unsuitable for small flies, so the switch to a dubbing body would have been inevitable.

Chauncy Lively tells me that he learned of the deer-hair sedge from Paul Young in the 1950s, by which time Young was cataloguing the design as a trout fly. I ~~xxxx~~ saw the fly (courtesy of Sid Neff) in 1971.

Al Troth reports that he first used hair wings on sedges in 1958. He was attempting to match a specific hatch in Pennsylvania, but his fly developed into the ~~xxxxxx~~ design he calls the "Elk-Hair Caddis." It is now perhaps the best-known fly of its kind in America: first because it is a sound design, but also because Troth takes uncommon care in choosing materials and tying each fly. His design has a palmer hackle but is otherwise identical to what I have described, more generically, as the Hair-Wing Sedge. He considers that the main purpose of the hackle is to provide an illusion of motion, not flotation. (With or without hackle, this design floats mainly on its wing.) In my view, the addition of hackle is helpful in fast water. In calmer streams I like the sharper silhouette provided by the version with no hackle.

Insert at bottom of p. 225/top of p. 226

As with the sedge, hair for the grasshopper's wing should be chosen for physical properties: strength, suppleness, and limited flare. Any of the usual deer-hair browns work well enough for wing color. For the body, I usually get by with hare's-ear fur dyed yellow in picric acid and ribbed with yellow tying thread. Using dubbing, however, it is easy to imitate the color of the bodies of real grasshoppers along the stream, and perhaps this is worth doing occasionally. (Trout seem to find more excuses for rejecting grasshoppers than any other insect that comes to mind.) The fly shown in the color plate was tied by Al Troth of Dillon, Montana. He used a body of deer-body hair tied flat along the shank and doubled back on itself for a second layer. This floats well and the trout often like it.

It's not clear (to me, at least) when the moth-sedge design was pressed into service as a grasshopper, but Chauncy Lively tells me that he was using it by the mid-'sixties. I think he had much to do with developing the attractive folded-hair body. In his articles for Pennsylvania Angler, he also ~~often~~ extended the use of deer-hair bodies to several other flies, including the Carpenter Ant.

Insert on p. 238

You might think that a down-tipped tail would help to keep the hook off the water -- and so it would, if you could place the fly on the surface by hand, carefully, in the position you want. In actual fishing, however, the effect of a down-tipped tail is to land the fly on its back. You don't want that, clearly, if the fly has wings in the normal position. For winged flies, leave the tails horizontal or tip them slightly upwards. If you are fishing with a hackle fly, however, you may want to tip the tail ^ωdon sharply so that the fly will land in a hook-up position. Just remember that the ^o(V)-tail is an airfoil, not a static display. You can check out the function of a tail by dropping your fly on a table (with no leader) from an altittude of a foot or so.

Insert footnote on p. 30

Try to get
original research
from The Field.

* Note to the second edition: Andrew Allen, in The Field of 2 March 1985, reports that "As a result of recent research it is now possible to say a great deal about how life looks through the eyes of a trout. Over the past two or three years neurophysiologists have invented micro-electrodes so small they can record the firing of individual nerve cells deep within the brain of an animal. By 'listening in' to messages as they travel along nerve fibers it is quite easy to discover precisely what the trout's eye tells the trout's brain. . . . The fisherman, concerned at exact imitation of natural flies, should take note. Except in bright light, colour is less important than shape, and shape less important than the pattern's movement." If this is correct, it provides remarkable corroboration of priorities that (of course) I worked out in very different way. There are ~~two~~ differences of detail: the report does not mention size, and "movement" is not as broad a concept as behavior. The reference to "bright light" needs clarification. In my experience, trout do not see colors as well in bright as in moderate light.

thought it were possible.

In practice, most of us probably wind up on the same fly, but we may get there unintentionally and in a state of some frustration. We might do better to listen closely to what the trout say about the different features of the natural. In doing so, it will obviously be helpful if we can get the features in rank order, so that, if necessary, we can omit one or more in favor of those more important.

From talks with trout like those mentioned above, one can suggest four features of artificial flies that seem to be involved in adapting to the trout's point of view.

They are:

- Behavior
- Size
- Shape
- Color

A The order of these four features can help in making rational decisions based on priorities. For example, if trout are rising for skittering sedges, and if no fly in the box is a really good match, it is better to pick a fly that will move like the natural rather than another that is the right color but which floats low in the surface film. Behavior takes precedence over color, say the trout. The example may seem extreme. Nevertheless, most fishermen picking an imitation look for color, which is easier to discern than behavior.

The rank-order of the features above will be worse than useless, however, if it is read to mean that the lower-priority features are unimportant. On the contrary, *all* of the four features are important in difficult conditions, although frequently not otherwise.

There is another qualification. The rank-order of the features is

only a helpful generality; it is no law and not even a rigid rule. In working over a real trout, we are dealing with relative values, not absolutes. Trout do not reason like humans, but they are still individual beings, with a capacity to learn. They do not have mechanical responses—not the wild ones I have talked to, anyhow. Sometimes trout in the same environment—the same bay of a lake, for example—have stomach contents that show striking individual preferences. One may have scuds and another a variety of surface food from midge pupae to grasshoppers. This is as great as the difference between the diets of a natural-food fan and a red-nosed consumer of beer and pretzels. (Speaking of gourmets, the scud-eating trout will be the best on the table, but the surface-feeder will be the most vulnerable to anglers.)

On rare occasions, the color of flies may be more important than their shape, even though my rank-order shows the opposite. Scotty Chapman, an artist highly conscious of color, tells me of an extreme case. He found Dolly Varden trout (char that behave like char) feeding on salmon eggs in Alaska. No fly would interest them till he tried an old squirrel-tail wet fly with a body close to the orange of an egg. In this case, color was more important than any other factor, with the possible exception of behavior. (I doubt that the fly would have worked on the surface.)

There is nothing necessarily wrong, the trout say, with exaggerating one or more of the four features. Behavior is frequently exaggerated, as in the dragging of a wet fly, while size is best understated (see chapter 6). Hackles wound in the usual fashion exaggerate the number of legs and wings on a natural fly (chapter 7). The color of artificial flies is commonly more gaudy than that of the natural model (chapter 8).

The exaggerations are usually accomplished by accident, but not always. Skues specifically recommended them, using hackles on nymphs as an example. Personally, I have little confidence in exaggerations of behavior and size, but I like to experiment with pronounced shapes and colors. Recently I saw a report of some research done by a Scottish scientist on hooded crows, which have the disagreeable custom of pecking the eyes out of young lambs in the spring. The scientist fitted some dead lambs with artificial

* Insert footnote

additional Revisions -

Not in 2nd Edition.

Keene -

See The American Fly Fisher Vol 13 #2, Spring 1986.

1985 article (before Halford) in American Field used the term "dry fly" & gave explicit directions for making it.

- Insisted on wings as a means of showing that fly was an imitation of floating adult (not his language), as opposed to a "hackled fly" ... looked on as a crowned insect by the fish and when they take it, it matters little how it is presented. Heavily into exact imitation & seems to see wings as their mark. Refers to "great unwinged" lunars.

- Describes no-hackle, extended-body flies. Notes hooking problems w/ extended bodies but used them anyhow.

- Most of material in this and other article in the series published in book form in 1887 as fly-fishing and Fly-Making.

[Q: did Halford do magazine articles before 1886?]

- Also dry terrestrial pattern for beetles + horse flies;

- Cork. bodied dry flies;

- Double. innerv. flies;

- a Keen. type fly

- Fish-scale-covered wings. Scales themselves too stiff.

[Beetle used jungle cork. like Vince?]

- Quill-bodied flies in 2nd (1891 edition of FF+FM)

Lyons. 887

September 12, 1988

Mr. Nick Lyons
Nick Lyons Books
31 West 21st St.
New York, NY 10010

Dear Nick:

I have corrected the proof sheets you sent me and return them herewith.

1. Question noted on the first page: shouldn't this be called a second edition, revised, rather than reprint?

2. Most of the problems I caught were minor typos, but there was one large omission: the corrections and additions to p. 198 were not made. I enclose another copy.

3. The top half of the hook chart on pp. 96/97 was not reproduced, except for one comment. I had revised the bottom half of the chart (enclosed) and this was reproduced accurately. Presumably the typesetters will know how to fit the whole chart together for the final proofs, but you might want to remind them.

4. Please note that the hook size chart on p.90 must be exactly the same size in the new edition as in the old. Otherwise the sizes will be all wrong. I mention this because J. Edson Leonard enlarged the chart in one of his editions and created much confusion. (Believe you said that we're going to larger paper.)

Perhaps you heard that all outdoor recreation, including fishing, was prohibited throughout Montana for a short period because of the fire danger. We've just had rain, so I assume that fun will be legal again forthwith. Come on out again if you get a chance.

Yours,

Enclosed: changes to pp. 198 and 96/97

The soft-hackle and invisible-hackle designs do not represent the same thing, however. The dense hackle of the former represents wings. The stiff, transparent hackle of the latter does not. The invisible-hackle design is therefore an artificial nymph in the strictest sense of the term.

The stiff-hackle and invisible-hackle designs differ only in degree, but they are fished very differently. The stiff-hackle fly is larger, thicker in hackle, bulkier and fuzzier in body. It is designed to be fished against the current. The invisible-hackle fly is designed to fish drag-free. The invisible-hackle design imitates a nymph; the soft-hackle, a dun; and the stiff-hackle, life in general but nothing in particular.

These differences go to the heart of the trout's interest -- which is in the behavior of the fly. It would be possible to tie flies which look much more distinctive than these three to humans, but which would not have the differences in behavior which matter to the trout.

Emerging insects are worth fussing over. Trout do.

Origin The invisible-hackle design resembles some of Skues' nymphs, although

96/97

Partridge Code A	14	14	0.40	71	Sproat bend, not forged. Good
"Wide-Gape Trout"	15	16	0.26	40	shape, temper, and finish.
2X-Fine	16	18	0.22	43	Heavier than most dry-fly hooks, but strength is exceptional.
Partridge Code L2A	14	14	0.43	64	About the same weight and
"Capt. Hamilton"					strength as the Code A, but
2X-Fine					with round bend. Flat-forged. Also available in lighter wire
Orvis Dry Fly Hook	14	12	0.43	30	Similar in weight and strength
(Japanese)	18	15	0.22	28	to Mustad 94840, but with finer
	20	16	0.17	25	barb and short, sharp point. Springy temper. Flat-forged.

✓ hereafter: some odd ideas and radical propositions, perhaps, but one theory is all we need. The one we have evolved some

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Upside-Down Variation The parachute design can be tied upside-down, keeping the hook out of the water. C.F. Walker showed such a design and called it a "freak" in 1957. An article by Ron Cordes in the December 1973 Fly Fisherman inspired more enthusiasm. The "stalking fly" he illustrated was tied by H.F. Janssen and, I thought, the best-looking artificial dun I had even seen. Its light pattern (with hackle underneath and hook up) was close to perfect.*

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Tying Notes For an imitative fly, the hackle should normally be sparse. Start with one of the long new "genetic" hackles and not more than two of the short kind. Traditionally, the hackle barbs (fibers) should also be short -- not longer than about one-and-three-quarters

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The soft-hackle and invisible-hackle designs do not represent the same thing, however. The dense hackle of the former represents wings. The stiff, transparent hackle of the latter does not. The invisible-hackle design is therefore an artificial nymph in the strictest sense of the term.

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Emerging insects are worth fussing over. Trout do.

Origin The invisible-hackle design resembles some of Skues' nymphs, although

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The Thompson Model A was the first modern vise to become popular. It must have made a vast difference to fly-tyers when it came on the market around the turn of the century: its cam-actuated lever worked quickly and positively, unlike the thumbscrews of older vises. I bought my first Model A in the 'fifties and still use it for big flies. Even with "midge" jaws, however, my version does not hold small hooks without slippage -- and I use small hooks most of the time.

Eventually I treated myself to an HMH "Spartan" vise designed by Bill Hunter, and regretted having waited so long. The jaws are very carefully machined. The smallest of them make it a pleasure to tie tiny flies. The vise as a whole is compact, fitting neatly in my larger traveling kit, but not my streamside kit. Several other beautiful vises are now on the market; I have not had the opportunity to test them. Good machining cannot be cheap.

For the streamside kit, I am still using a pin vise. It is not good, but it is cheap and small.

re 2nd edition

Note S's ref. to early designs of
reverse-bite fly
upside-down hook

check my ref to Catehill (p. 115) to
S's discussion of them in { Gordon chapter, + on p. 262.
p. 118

add LaBarber's 5 elements (p 170 Beh.)?

They include "position of fly on the water"
(But served as a kind of excuse for not getting to
know the insects + imitating them w/a purpose,
even as to behaviour, size, shape

What The Trout Said

This book mixes the mood and the method of angling for trout, the why and the how, the search and the finding. Most twentieth-century books aren't like that -- but then most of the things we do these days aren't like trout fishing.

To do it well, you imitate nature. Some trout demand that, and anyhow, it's fun. You find what insect the trout is wont to eat, and then you offer him a copy in feathers and fur, but with a hook in it. This is your interpreter, your icon, perhaps your hope of dinner. The trout tells you if your fly is good.

He's not easy to understand. We humans, for example, like to fuss over the fly's color. ~~It's something we've always understood.~~ Not the trout: he watches the way the fly behaves. You can do that too -- it's easy enough when you know what to look for -- and then you can control the behavior by good design. Here you'll find designs for every important fly, including some you may not have seen.

For each design the author gives credit to original sources, but he doesn't repeat folklore without testing it. Hooks are checked for strength and leverage. Furs and feathers are ranked by qualities you can understand. The finished designs are rated for weak points as well as strengths. No one tries to sell you anything: not even the trout. He just shows you how to make your own choice.

Do you know:

- what features trout want in your flies, in priority order? (Chapter 2)
- how to design flies that will behave exactly as you want, on or in the water? (Chapters 3, 9, 10, 11)
- which hooks are best for strength, lightness, and hooking leverage? (Chapter 5)
- which feathers and hairs work best for wings, and why? (Chapter 7)
- how to make even small dry flies land right-side-up and float cocked? (Chapter 12)
- that bouyant materials make low-floating flies? (Chapter 6)
- how much a real insect weighs by comparison to your fly? (Chapter 6)
- which American birds will give you soft hackles as good as any of the traditional feathers imported from Britain? (Chapter 12)
- how to make a "no-hackle" fly without fragile quills or stiff hairs? (Chapter 10)
- how to settle the old argument about the importance of presentation vs. imitation? (Chapter 1)
- that we have several thousand fly patterns we don't need? (Introduction)

I want to give imitative flies
from their friends.

INTRODUCTION TO THE SECOND EDITION

Fly-fishing is the sport that asks why. We may release the trout, but we cling to his mysteries. Why does he take one fly and refuse others? An answer offers, till other trout come along to reject it. One after another, over at least five centuries, they have molded our sport into curious strata of science, art, and magic. This has attracted thoughtful people. They have written many books on the meeting of trout and fly. I love them, and I think that most have been wrong.

The trout's universe does not spin as we thought. He takes the fly not because its color is right -- as we have wanted to believe during those centuries -- but because it behaves like a natural insect. When color matters, it matters least.

We need a root change: not a revolution but a return to nature, in the form of a trout. That means throwing out an accretion of human baggage. I didn't insist on this enough in the first edition. In the little universe of fly-fishing, we have the sun and the planets as mixed up as they were before Copernicus. When he suggested that the earth revolved around the sun rather than vice versa, theologians knew he was wrong. We who tie trout flies know that the way to imitate a natural insect is to match its color.

We insist on seeing the sun rise, too, though Copernicus

showed that it couldn't. Real universe be damned, and real trout with it. We want to imitate little olive flies with little olive artificial flies. Men everywhere do it, though we English-speakers have a right to be more culture-bound than most; our ancestors made fly-fishing what it is. The French enjoy straightening us out. Jean-Paul Pequegnot uses a pink fly and the trout take it as well as an olive one. But trout are barbarians. Why should fly-fishing be organized to please fish when humans are in control?

Because it is getting messy. We have thousands of flies that differ hardly at all, except in color. The trout says that we need only a few, differing in behavior. This (being no more wisdom than a trout has) is barbaric.

Now you see why I was shy about moving the universe around too brusquely in the first edition. I am not ambitious of ridicule. Besides, in the 'seventies I wasn't sure how many readers out there would welcome an unfamiliar way of looking at trout fishing or, for that matter, how many wanted to think about fishing at all. I tried to make the book interesting for those who don't tie their own flies or know the names of each insect floating down the current. Angling shouldn't be so complex that it's a chore -- or so simple that it's a bore.

People who have liked the book do seem to think of fishing as fun, which makes me happy. On the other hand, there were readers who asked whether I was writing about imitation or

presentation, which shows how hard it is to break old patterns of thought. Presentation is part of imitation, not something opposed to it. The trout explains in Chapter Two.

It may also be helpful to explain where science, art, and magic fit into this book.

- + Science is nature, accurately seen. An artificial trout fly that imitates nature (from the trout's point of view, not ours) is scientific in this broad sense.
- + Art is "not imitation of nature but liberation from nature" -- a definition borrowed from Professor Allan Bloom.* A fly aimed at catching humans, rather than trout, is artistic.
- + Magic is supernatural, like talking trout. Do not confuse magic and art. Art escapes from the natural; magic interprets nature, venturing to explain what science cannot yet see.

The time may be close when tiny electrodes implanted in the trout's brain will tell us how he thinks, scientifically. I am betting that the scientific trout will agree with my magic trout. Meanwhile, he must remain magic -- not because he is cute but because he is honest. I want you to believe him, but I also want you to know that I cannot prove what he says.

* The Closing of the American Mind. NY: Simon and Schuster, 1987.

Science, art, and magic are all good; a fishing attitude that squeezes out any of them is the worse for it. But it is up to an author to avoid confusing the three. Muddles of science and magic have produced astrology instead of astronomy, lunar tables instead of biology. Mixtures of science and art have produced ten thousand pretty flies we don't need.

Readers will have little trouble in recognizing the difference between magic and science. (The talking trout is there to help.) The difference between art and science is, to say the least, fuzzy in fishing literature. I shall try to draw attention to the confusion when we talk about color.

Fly patterns are mostly art, so I left them out of this book (and was relieved to find that few readers seemed to mind).

This is not a history, either, though I try to discover origins. (Readers care passionately about history, which says something about fly-fishing.)

It looks, now, as if anglers will be talking about the design of flies for a while, so there are more sources that should be acknowledged. No one had written a book on fly-design when I wrote this one, and I thought that no one had used the term with the same purpose. But of course someone had. He was W. H. Lawrie, who mentioned design in at least three books. In Scottish Trout Flies, published in London in 1966, he clearly had in mind what I was searching for between 1973 and 1977 (when this book was written). Lawrie analyzed the design of traditional wet flies. Further, he noted that another British angler -- Henry

(after my first edition)

Lamond -- had referred to the design of flies in 1921. (It took Vince Marinaro to catch this and tell me about it.)

In hindsight, it was logical that the first references to design should have appeared in Britain: the British have been fishing with imitative flies for a long time. It is also logical that the first book on the subject should have appeared in the United States. The British need design, but not as badly. They have an old and attractive way with flies: they identify one that the trout likes to eat and then imitate it better and better for a few centuries. Every generation makes improvements, but few suggest departures. For this approach to work, however, anglers must concern themselves with only a few, specific, well-known insects. It turns out that the British, who live on an island, do have only a few; and the Irish, who live on an island behind an island, have even fewer. At least, there used to be only a few. These days, with new still-water fisheries and a fair share of environmental problems, there are more times when mayflies do not rule the waves; and the sedges, midges, empids and such are not as well known.

Outside Britain and Ireland, the trout have usually been feeding on insects that I could not identify by species. Frequently even professional entomologists have been reluctant to identify these insects below generic level.

Enter design. I want to know what I'm doing. I'd like to know the name of every insect (and tree, rock, flower and

mermaid), but I don't. Without the name, I can't look up an imitation. I can see how the natural fly is behaving, though, and pick one from a fly-box that behaves likewise. If it is the right size, it will probably work. If it is also the right shape, it may work better than an imitation from a book. Design does not have to be more complicated than that.

The first edition of this book did not credit fly designs appearing in books after 1977. It also omitted some writers I should have known about, but didn't. The French think readily in design terms, and Pequegnot's book -- now available in English -- has several designs that reached a peak of development in France. The Spanish have a fly-fishing literature that is almost as old as the British, and Spanish wet-fly designs are completely different, but there is no book on them in English yet. I cannot read German or Italian very well, and I would not venture to try Preben Torp Jacobsen in Danish. The best single set of suggestions on the 1982 edition of this book came from a brilliant Dutch angler, Rudi van Alberda. (That says something about what fly-fishing has become: they scarcely have trout in Holland.)

Mind you, the British have lost their monopoly, but they have not slowed down. Brian Clarke and John Goddard have written The Trout And The Fly, which proposes new designs and shows why they are useful in photographs that compare to Vince Marinaro's. Neil Patterson describes simple, innovative mayfly designs.

In America, there is a boom in fly-fishing and in books

about it. Gary LaFontaine's book on caddis-flies contains original designs based on research. Chauncy K. Lively was one of our first purposeful fly-designers, and his ideas are now available in book form. Sylvester Nemes' two books have helped to revive one of the oldest designs -- the soft-hackle fly.

I have added one new wet-fly design and one dry in this edition, and in time might learn enough to want more. Most of the flies are still surface or mid-water designs. The latter may help to fill a gap in the literature, which often focuses on either top or bottom. More important, it's easier to sink flies than float them, so we don't need quite as many deep-sinking designs. This is not to say that it is any easier to fish deep. I just don't want to fix things that ain't broke.

Designs aren't like patterns, which go on forever. A great many of the designs we need originated (though were not fully developed) by 1950. Even by 1920, or 1900. And, as Nelson Bryant wrote in The New York Times, it "would require a sabbatical or an independent income" to act on all the recent fishing books (let alone magazines). Please forgive omissions and let me know about them. Anglers who have already done so will note changes in this edition.

Ireland; the insects look alike. Clipped deer-hair is unsuitable for small flies, so the switch to a dubbing body would have been inevitable.

Chauncy Lively tells me that he learned of the Hair-Wing sedge from Paul Young in the 1950s, by which time Young was cataloguing the design as a trout fly. I first saw the fly (courtesy of Sid Neff) in 1971.

Al Troth reports that he first used hair wings on sedges in 1958. He was attempting to match a specific hatch in Pennsylvania, but his fly developed into the design he calls the "Elk-Hair Caddis." It is now perhaps the best-known fly of its kind in America: first because it is a sound design, but also because Troth takes uncommon care in choosing materials and tying each fly he sells. His design has a palmer hackle but is otherwise identical to what I have described, more generically, as the Hair-Wing Sedge. He considers that the main purpose of the hackle is to provide an illusion of motion, not flotation. (With or without hackle, the design floats mainly on its wing.) In my view, the addition of hackle is helpful in fast water -- and Al lives in Montana, where there is plenty of that. In calmer streams I like the sharper silhouette provided by the version with no hackle.

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single jungle-cock eye feather for the back. Jungle cock is good -- being nearly opaque with a pale dot for visibility -- but there is no need to use a feather that is now so scarce. These days,

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in different form.

As with the sedge, hair for the grasshopper's

225

wing should be chosen for physical properties: strength, suppleness, and limited flare. Any of the usual deer-hair browns work fine for color. For the body, try more deer-hair tied flat along the shank and doubled back on itself for a second layer. A ribbing of tying thread holds the whole thing in place. It floats well, and trout like it. The fly in the color plate was tied this way by Al Troth of Dillon, Montana.

Another good body is made of dubbed hare's-ear fur dyed yellow in picric acid, also with a ribbing. Using dubbing, it is easy to match the color of real grasshoppers along the stream. Perhaps this is worth doing occasionally. (I doubt that the trout care, but they do seem to find a lot of excuses for rejecting grasshoppers.)

I don't know exactly when the moth/sedge design was pressed into use a hopper, but Chauncy Lively tells me that he was using it by the mid-'sixties. I think he had much to do with developing the attractive folded-hair body. In his articles for Pennsylvania Angler, he also extended the use of deer-hair bodies to several other terrestrials, including the Carpenter Ant.

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tions, but it lacks Woolley's knowledge of insects. There are undoubtedly good modern manuals that I have not seen, but I can recommend Richard W. Talleur's Mastering the Art of Fly-Tying (Harrisburg: Stackpole, 1979).

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down, or horizontal? This is an important part of the dry fly's geometry, and I don't recall seeing it explained in design terms.

Those are the only terms that matter. The tail does not seem very noticeable to the trout, unless you make it so thick that it becomes a sort of extended body. You can use any color, divide the tail or leave it in one bunch, even put a tail on flies that shouldn't have it -- like the black gnat -- and the trout won't pay much attention.

But the tail will markedly affect the way the fly lands and floats. Some fly-tyers like to tip the tail down, hoping that it will elevate the hook off the water. This might work if the fly could be placed on the water by hand, carefully, in exactly the desired position. In fishing, however, the down-tipped tail turns the fly over on its back. You don't want this, clearly, if the fly has wings in the normal position. For winged flies, rock the tail slightly upwards and divide it. This makes the fly much more likely to cock.

On the other hand, if you are fishing with a plain hackle fly, a sharply down-tipped tail will often land the fly with hook up, out of the water. This is the simplest of hook-up designs, and perhaps the best -- though the hook won't always land just as you want it.

The point to remember is that the tail is an airfoil, not a static display. The V-tail makes an airfoil that is twice as good as the clumped tail. You can check out the design of a tail by dropping the fly on the table -- even without a leader -- from an altitude of a foot or more. Flies that cock well when you do this will probably cock on the stream.

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Partridge Code A	14	14	0.40	71	Sproat bend, not forged.
"Wide-Gape Trout"	15	16	0.26	40	shape, temper, and finish
2X-Fine	16	18	0.22	43	Heavier than most dry-fly but strength is exception

See separate chart (p. 12)

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rather than two bunches at the sides. this makes an excellent wing -- the best I know for small duns. See the Barb-Wing design in Chapter 10.

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This design, like the Parachute Fly, can be tied upside-down, with hook-point riding upright. But hooking ability is still not good enough in the upside-down version.

Tied with hook-point down in the normal position, this design has better-than-average hooking ability. There is nothing at all to mask the point and no stiff materials to catch on the trout's mouth. There is no other imitation of a dun that

The no-hackle duns and the Barb-Wing work well in the smaller sizes. I like their wing outline and simplicity. They do not cock reliably, however. For medium-sized flies with prominent wings -- which make cocking important -- a hackle can be helpful.

The hackle of the Parachute Fly is well positioned for cocking, so this design works in the medium sizes. Trout take it eagerly. My next step was to try a number of 

41

had a good angling entomology in 1836. Harris, in 1950, gave

63

Grasshoppers are wildly unreliable (a careful choice of words). They are popular with anglers because, being big, hoppers interest big fish. Given a hot, windy, late-summer day on a Montana meadow stream, the fish always notice grasshoppers, often rise spectacularly, and sometimes get hooked. This is about the way

Montana boys behave at the Saturday night dance. One surmises that the fish, like the boys, are simultaneously attracted and wary. As to the Saturday nights, I have no advice, but one way to handle grasshoppers is to fish them wet. You wouldn't expect to find a nice insect like the grasshopper two feet under water, but the trout don't seem to mind.

Hoppers also work in Pennsylvania meadow streams, but not as often. They are not common in the British and Irish streams I have have fished; low temperature may again be the difference.

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feeding response. (Downstream fishing with a slack line produces the same effect as upstream fishing, from the trout's point of view: a drag-free float. I am using "upstream fishing" here as a kind of shorthand to cover all drag-free presentations.)

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Catskill dry flies were taken from British models and were almost identical in design terms. Theodore Gordon found excellent hatches; some Catskill streams still have them.

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surface is, from the trout's point of view, a vast mirror. He presumably takes the mirror for granted, but we humans find it puzzling. Perhaps this homology will help. The glass mirror on your wall at home reflects because of two things: first, an opaque back; and second, a source of light in front. The light is easy to understand: there is almost always a little, even at night, and even down there where the fish is. The difficult thing to grasp is that clear water and

bright sky can form a background impenetrable to certain light rays. Perhaps a look upwards from the depths of a swimming pool will be more convincing than any number of words.

The trout cannot see through the mirror to detect the color or

Color plate after p. 146

Barb-wing Dun

p.148

In all colors, superb quality is available (at a price). American breeders have developed strains of roosters surpassing anything our ancestors had -- at least for the majority of fly-tyers who want short, stiff barbs.

[Note to Editor: the correct term is "barbs," not "barbules."]

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Many good anglers cannot be bothered to tie complicated flies. Simple designs that work well are available, and a number of them are described in the following pages. It is a curious thing that rough flies tied from a portable kit, with trimmings falling off in the morning coffee, have a way of catching more fish than the complicated products of my winter's evenings.

Fly designs are also related to personal angling styles. Writers are not always aware of this, but the point leaps out of a comparison of almost any two fishing books. In choosing a floating design, for example, it helps to know whether the angler casts upstream or cross-stream, uses fine leaders or stout, takes time to dry and re-grease his fly, casts often or seldom, has good visibility or bad, fishes to rises or blind, and so on. No wonder different anglers swear by different flies. And no wonder anglers come to

rely on old reliables that work for their personal styles

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color or (within limits) size. The rear hackle should be tied shiny-side-forward and the front hackle reversed, so that the fibers of the two hackles tip away from each other. If a very small fly is wanted, however, only one good hackle is necessary. Tie it on dull-side-forward. Make two small turns at the rear of the body,

* Footnote p. 190

* Since writing the above passage for the first edition, I have read The Trout And The Fly, by Brian Clarke and John Goddard. It is an important book and one that I like very much. The authors recommend an upside-down design identical to Janssen's, and this is one of very few points on which I cannot agree with them.

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during a rise to medium-sized duns. For the smallest duns, see the next section.

The Barb-Wing Dun and Two No-Hackles "No-Hackle" flies have become popular for good reasons. They make excellent representations of small mayfly duns, and they use no expensive materials. They are difficult to overdress: an exaggerated wing may even help. Flies tied with deer-hair wings have, however, some disadvantages noted below; and quill wings have more. These prompted the Barb-Wing. It cannot logically be called a no-hackle fly, because it starts with an inexpensive hackle. When finished, however, the Barb-Wing is almost identical to the two no-hackles -- in design terms.

Please note here that a hackle barb is exactly the same thing as a hackle fiber. I chose the shorter term because, in addition to saving a syllable, it is more accurate. The hackle barb is not likely to be confused with the barb on a hook. Barbs and barbules are commonly confused, however. Barbules are the fuzzy projections fringing the edges of the barbs of most feathers. Cocks' hackles do not have barbules except on the portion we call the "web," near the stalk at base of the feather.

Origin Flies tied only with wings are the most obvious of designs, and probably the oldest. The Spanish rely on them. The Gold-Ribbed Hare's Ear has long been valued as a no-hackle dry fly. In America, however, the popularity of no-hackle dries began with the work of Swisher and Richards. They redesigned the old fly so that it worked better than ever, using Marinaro's divided V-tail and "thorax" design. Quill wings were then added with an ingenious geometry that helped to cock the fly. Swisher and Richards also mentioned a "hair clump no-hackle." Slightly later, Caucci and Nastase developed the no-hackle hair-wing, which is easier to tie and more durable. It is best for slightly larger duns.

In working out the Barb-Wing, I was guided by the above flies and also by Roger Woolley's design, which in its day became popular because it avoided the problems of quill wings. (Angling repeats its cycles as fast as other human endeavors.) As far as I know, however, Woolley always used his clumped-hackle wing at the head of the fly and added a second hackle that was left full circle. In effect, Woolley's fly was the conventional design with an improved wing. The Barb-Wing uses a single hackle that is wound and clumped well back from the eye, thorax-fashion.

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Barb wing

it is easier to achieve the correct V. The resulting fly is durable, attractive to fish, and popular. There are, however, problems inherent in deer hair. It is coarse, running from about

.005" to .016" in diameter. The finest diameters (such as those from a deer's mask) tie up into an attractive fly, even in the smallest sizes. Unfortunately, these hairs are heavy, and the fly sinks faster than most wet flies. The thicker hairs do float, because they are hollow.

At this point, however, keep in mind that stiffness increases with the fourth power of diameter. A fine deer hair of .005" diameter is, therefore, roughly forty times stiffer than an average hackle barb measuring .002". The hackle, clearly, is going to collapse more easily in the trout's mouth. Hackles also float better than fine deer's hair, are more durable, have more sheen, and (least important) are available in more natural colors.

Hackles cost more than quill or feathers, so the barb-wing design may appeal less to professionals. It is easier to tie than the quill-wing and about as easy as the hair wing. Fly-tyers will find that it is almost impossible to tie the barb-wing so that it fails to fish well -- at worst, it unravels into the full-circle hackle from which it began. Simply

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level. The fact that it rides so near the surface gives me a chance to see the rise and hook the fish.

This, then, is one of those flies that may work when all else fails.

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the design's popularity. More recently, a pattern called the Henryville has been regionally popular in America.

Purists might object to using the term

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Preen-Gland Fly Jest, if you must, at this fragile beauty. Then hasten to assault a duck for the necessary hackles. You will find them atop the uropygium, which is the bulge we call "the parson's nose" at the stern of the bird. They are curious, specialized feathers, having to do -- I surmise -- with the transfer of oil from the gland. They are long-fibered, short-shafted, sparse, soft, and webby: everything that classic dry-fly hackles are not.

And they catch trout that refuse classic dry flies.

Those, in fact, are the only trout for which the preen-gland feather is worth using. It floats better than you would guess, thanks to natural oils, but once wet is difficult to dry. The flotant that does the job best is based on carbon tetrachloride, a dry-cleaning solvent which, unfortunately, turns out to be carcinogenic. Better just tie several of the flies. Don't bother with them in fast water or for easy trout. Do bother when cautious fish are rising to duns in flat water. The gauzy, supple, misty-gray barbs have the delicacy of a real mayfly.

The name of the fly in French is Cul de Canard, which is imprecise. The modest translation is "Duck's Rump" in the English-language version of Jean-Paul Pequegnot's book (French Fishing Flies, 1987). I have rejected Parson's Nose and D.A., neither of which are names deserving of immortality. "Preen-Gland Fly" is accurate and does not inhibit flirtation with birds other than ducks. Woodcock and pheasant preen-gland feathers look good too, though I have not given them an adequate test.

Origin Dr. Pequegnot reports that the fly originated in Vallorbe,

in the Swiss section of the Jura. It is also widely used just across the border in France. I have not seen the name of the genius -- probably rural -- who first gazed on this feather and didn't know enough to discard it.

I was introduced to the fly by Rudi van Alberda, a Dutch angler. Judging from the feathers he sent me, and from the French flies I have seen, domestic ducks are the original (or at least usual) source. Not mine, though. Wild ducks fly my way, frequently, and stay to be plucked, occasionally. I like their hackles even better.

Tying Notes First catch your duck. The hackles you seek form a sparse circle around the preen gland. To find them, be guided by the sculptor who made a marble statue by chipping away everything that didn't look like Venus. In the case of the hackles, larger tail and rump feathers almost hide what you are looking for.

This is a dry fly, despite its appearance, and it will float longer if you use a wide-spread tail of cock's-hackle fibers. The body should be light in weight (dubbing or tying silk, for example -- not deer hair). The hackle is easy to wind in the normal way. My own preference is to use only one feather. Tied thus, the fly is as gauzy as a natural mayfly and slips into the trout's mouth with scarcely more resistance. French fly-tyer Aime Devaux, however, tied preen-gland flies with wings and a stiff little hackle behind the duck's feather, to reinforce it.

I have not tried these and don't see a need for wings on this design, but would wind a reinforcing hackle if I needed a longer float. (The Bent-Hackle Fly uses that design.)

If you use domestic-duck hackles, they will be too long of fiber. The easy way to shorten them is to wind the hackle and then pull all the barbs forward over the eye of the hook. One snip will then clip all to the same length.

Advantages

- + Easy and cheap, once you have subdued your duck.
- + Light and air-resistant, but still supple. Falls gently and hooks deeply.
- + Fools difficult fish.

Disdvantages

- + Fragile and difficult to keep afloat.
- + A catch-it-if-you-can proposition. The feathers are not in any catalog I have seen at this writing.

Even make a trout fly. It would be difficult to overstate the importance of color to humans.

There lies the problem. In no other aspect of fishing does the human cultural overlay make it so difficult to hear the trout. We demand that he agree with us. Most of this book is science, in the broad sense that I try to discover results instead of fabricating them. To discover is science; to fabricate is art. In discussing the trout's view of color, I do not know where to locate the boundary between science and art, and the only honest course is to confess. My suspicion is that color in trout flies is mostly art. It is important, but mainly for building confidence in humans.

Vince Marinaro doubted that the subject of color and the trout should be pursued at all in the light of present knowledge. Anglers do insist on dealing with color constantly, however. Vince himself -- on one of our last trips together -- was delighted by a cape he had just bought with silver-colored hackles. (Not pale blue: silver.) He wasn't arguing that the trout cared, though I didn't hear him ruling that out, either. He just knew that he liked the hackles. Let us discuss color with equal detachment.

Trout do take some flies and refuse others, which is selectivity. I have proved (at least to my own satisfaction) that they are often selective to the behavior and size of a fly;

sometimes to its shape. I have also proved that trout are often non-selective or only very slightly selective. I am not sure I have ever proved -- in the same strict sense -- that they are selective to color. I have the impression that they are, occasionally. The examples that seem clearest are those with bright colors: red-bodied spinners (Chapter 2), green free-swimming caddis larvae (cited by Gary LaFontaine), salmon eggs. It is easy to see how a trout could use such colors as for identification.

Examples of selectivity to drab colors also seem to occur, and I have cited a few. For some reason, my examples have a way of coming from Ireland. I don't think it's magic. In discussing revisions to this second edition with a friend, though, I mentioned that I was growing more and more unsure about color and the trout. I couldn't think of a clear case of color selectivity in five years. He couldn't think of one either, and he fishes in many difficult waters.

Of course, we seldom try to prove selectivity. Catching trout is too much fun. We put on a fly of some color close to that of the naturals, and it works. We could say: he eats, therefore he is selective. (If you are not familiar with that kind of fractured Cartesian reasoning, pull some fishing books and magazines off your shelf and look at them more carefully.) But selectivity is choice. A trout has not made a choice unless he has rejected one kind of fly consistently while accepting

another. We must look to rejection, not acceptance, to prove selectivity; and rejection is not fun.

There are, however, some things we do know. Scientists have shown that trout can perceive color. This suggests that color vision has had some evolutionary value for them trout. What we do not know is how trout use this vision, if indeed they do. Does it help them to avoid predators? Does it help them to tell good food from bad? If so, what do they look for? If they want some specific color, why do they ignore the big bronze hook that protrudes below the fly? The answers we have to these questions usually amount to little more than folklore.

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selves, I do not mean to say that we can always ignore color. It seldom matters, but if trout care about it at all, we will want to pay some attention. Suppose you are dealing with an individual, difficult fish: either you hook him or you do not. If color gives him a feeble excuse to refuse the fly, there is no consolation in believing that he may have found the imitation almost good enough.

Even make a trout fly. It would be difficult to overstate the importance of color to humans.

There lies the problem. In no other aspect of fishing does the human cultural overlay make it so difficult to hear the trout. We demand that he agree with us. Most of this book is science, in the broad sense that I try to discover results instead of fabricating them. To discover is science; to fabricate is art. In discussing the trout's view of color, I do not know where to locate the boundary between science and art, and the only honest course is to confess. My suspicion is that color in trout flies is mostly art. It is important, but mainly for building confidence in humans.

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Trout do take some flies and refuse others, which is selectivity. I have proved (at least to my own satisfaction) that they are often selective to the behavior and size of a fly;

sometimes to its shape. I have also proved that trout are often non-selective or only very slightly selective. I am not sure I have ever proved -- in the same strict sense -- that they are selective to color. I have the impression that they are, occasionally. The examples that seem clearest are those with bright colors: red-bodied spinners (Chapter 2), green free-swimming caddis larvae (cited by Gary LaFontaine), salmon eggs. It is easy to see how a trout could use such colors as for identification.

Examples of selectivity to drab colors also seem to occur, and I have cited a few. For some reason, my examples have a way of coming from Ireland. I don't think it's magic. In discussing revisions to this second edition with a friend, though, I mentioned that I was growing more and more unsure about color and the trout. I couldn't think of a clear case of color selectivity in five years. He couldn't think of one either, and he fishes in many difficult waters.

Of course, we seldom try to prove selectivity. Catching trout is too much fun. We put on a fly of some color close to that of the naturals, and it works. We could say: he eats, therefore he is selective. (If you are not familiar with that kind of fractured Cartesian reasoning, pull some fishing books and magazines off your shelf and look at them more carefully.) But selectivity is choice. A trout has not made a choice unless he has rejected one kind of fly consistently while accepting

another. We must look to rejection, not acceptance, to prove selectivity; and rejection is not fun.

There are, however, some things we do know. Scientists have shown that trout can perceive color. This suggests that color vision has had some evolutionary value for them ~~trout~~. What we do not know is how trout use this vision, if indeed they do. Does it help them to avoid predators? Does it help them to tell good food from bad? If so, what do they look for? If they want some specific color, why do they ignore the big bronze hook that protrudes below the fly? The answers we have to these questions usually amount to little more than folklore.

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selves, I do not mean to say that we can always ignore color. It seldom matters, but if trout care about it at all, we will want to pay some attention. Suppose you are dealing with an individual, difficult fish: either you hook him or you do not. If color gives him a feeble excuse to refuse the fly, there is no consolation in believing that he may have found the imitation almost good enough.

[Ed. -- This new section begins at p. 197. One new design (the Stiff-Hackle Wet Fly) is added, and the Soft-Hackle Fly is moved into this section from the dry-fly section.]

ies, tails, and wings. Wet fly materials can therefore be chosen with less regard to lightness and water-resistance.

Second, trout do not seem as selective about deeply sunk flies. Please note that this is a relative statement; I have not said that selectivity disappears when the fly sinks. It does seem to diminish with depth. Selectivity appears most common with flies that are in, or just under, the surface film. Really high-floating dries do not seem to seem to induce much selectivity, and neither do the deepest nymphs.

It follows that we often cannot be rigorously sure what a trout thinks a deeply-sunk fly is when he takes it. I have listed all of these designs, shallow and deep, among the mayflies because -- well, because they had to go somewhere, and this is a book about imitative flies. But the trout seem to consider the deeply-fished flies generic. At least, the fish find them just as acceptable as caddis-flies, stoneflies, and various other things.

As a routine precaution, most of us try to make any fly look something like the natural, and with nymphs it is easy to get carried away. They invite "exact imitations." Being heavier than water, they will always sink, and having sunk, they will catch fish. Given a little more lead, they will get down to the trout's level even if they are made to bristle with natural-looking legs,

tails, wing-pads, and eyeballs. These gorgeous creations may even be as good as simple flies. They are seldom better. In a book that is based on the trout's opinion, I am reluctant to list designs that have not proven necessary.

The designs shown are durable, easy to tie, and attractive to trout. They can be modified to match almost any natural. The main modifications should be to behavior (especially rate of sinking and current-resistance), but size and color can obviously be changed too.

Stiff-Hackle Wet Fly Fly-tying manuals have often recommend stiff hackles from roosters for dry flies and supple hackles from hens for wet flies. Most of us ignore such advice. We use stiff hackles for both kinds of flies because we have roosters' capes lying around, and we are too stingy to throw them away when we've used up the best dry-fly feathers. The rejects are sparsely barbed, badly shaped, or just too big, but they are stiff and shiny. They nevertheless make good wet flies. It wouldn't be quite right to say that I used to feel guilty about this -- a trout splashing around in the net can erase any amount of guilt -- but I did wonder, in calmer moments, if I was doing something wrong.

It was the manuals that were wrong. They provided an example of the confusion that writers spawn when one repeats another's advice for generations without checking back to original sources, and their reasons. The source of the advice to use soft hackles seems to be clearly British. It would be difficult to unravel the

thread back to one specific author -- angling books so seldom confess their sources -- but we might not go far wrong in focusing on W.C. Stewart. While flies with soft hackles were fished long before him, no other wet-fly specialist achieved such vast influence on so many generations of anglers (and writers).

Now, the important point about Stewart is that he fished upstream, and persuaded others to do likewise. In upstream (and cross-stream) fishing, flies descend at about the same speed as the current -- perhaps a bit faster. Soft hackles are ideal under these circumstances. They are dense, visible, and supple enough to move even when the fly itself is moving very little, in relation to the current.

When a fly is fished downstream, the problem is different. For much of its course the fly must work against the current. If the hackle is supple and the current strong, the hackle fibers collapse backward. This is not to say that the soft-hackle fly then fails: with hackle compressed, it looks something like a nymph, and nymphs work when fished downstream. But the compressed hackle does lose the mobility which it has when fished as Stewart recommended. In his words, flies "dressed of very soft feathers are more suitable for fishing up than fishing down, as if drawn against the stream, it runs the fibres alongside the hook, and all resemblance to a winged insect is destroyed."

I have seen many American anglers fishing downstream with wet flies. I have never seen one fishing traditional wet flies

upstream. Such anglers do exist: Jim Bashline is one of them, and he has written about the technique in Field & Stream. But I think we can take it -- on the basis of my informal but prolonged stream census -- that the downstream wet fly remains vastly more common in this country.

This means that our traditional stiff-hackled wet flies remain as useful as ever, though out of fashion. Some of them do (in my view) have a design defect: they use wings of duck primaries or secondaries, which are easy to tie but have little action. One solution is to use a wing of some material like wood-duck breast feathers or the secondaries of small birds -- which are much more flexible than duck. In larger flies, squirrel-tail is good. The idea is to find materials that are neither limp nor rigid. A cock's hackle is hard to beat, and I usually tie it full-circle, with no wings at all, in the smaller wet flies.

Let me recommend that you add a smaller, stiff-hackled wet fly to your leader next season whenever you fish some other fly down- or cross-stream. Put the little fly on as a dropper, two or three feet above your streamer, deep-fishing nymph, or whatever. Just do it routinely. There will be two effects. First, you may catch fish that would not have taken otherwise. Second, you will learn something about selectivity (or the absence thereof) in trout. If you like to believe that they are always selective, you may not enjoy finding out how often they take a little dropper fly that seems to imitate nothing and everything in nature: nothing specific and everything alive.

Origin See the comments under the dry hackle fly. The wet version is probably older than the dry, though British angling historian Jack Heddon has doubts about that.

Traditional American wet flies certainly had British and Irish origins. One logical source would have been the wet fly tied to fish downstream in running water, as Cutcliffe did it. His flies were much like those I use in Pennsylvania, but then my flies are modern. Old American wet flies look more like traditional lough flies. (The word is spelled loch if you are Scottish, but I am married to Ireland.) Our American ancestors did fish in the lough style, though few of us do it today.

Lough flies -- notably big ones for the Greendrake -- are sometimes tied with mallard flank feathers (which are semi-supple). Other non-poultry hackles are occasionally used, but for color, I think, rather than motion. Most lough flies are dressed with sparse but stiff cocks' hackles. These are the flies that look familiar to Americans. All are shallow-fishing wets, and the top dropper is often worked on the surface, where it takes more than its share of fish. The fly shown here is exactly the same as my favorite Irish light-and-motion design.

Tying Notes This fly moves a lot of water, which might make it suitable in large sizes for night-fishing. I don't do much of that and confine myself to medium sizes: say about 10 through 14, Redditch scale. The gape, however, should be ample. The Partridge Code A or Captain Hamilton seem ideal, in standard or heavy wire.

Small double hooks also work well. Try a body of stiff guard hairs picked out through turns of tinsel. Perhaps any color would suit the fish, but there are two that please me: gold-ribbed hare's ear with furnace hackle and silver-ribbed black seal with black hackle. The hackle is wound at the shoulder and is always shiny-side-forward. Cutcliffe urges that it be "of a brilliant lustre, reflecting and sparkling in the light"

Advantages

- +Simple and sturdy.
- +A good light-and-motion design.

Disadvantages

- +Emotionally unsatisfying, if you like to know exactly what your fly imitates.
- +Can be fished deep only if heavily weighted.

Conclusions The stiff-hackled wet fly fits the downstream method most of us use. The barbs of a cock's hackle provide mobility, even against the current. Their shine and translucency provide an illusion of life.

Please do not conclude, though, that stiff hackles are better than soft, or vice versa. The right hackle is the one that matches the fishing. It is easy to check: you just let the flies drift or swing in the current, as you will be fishing them, and watch their behavior. In Leisenring's words, "select a stiff, medium, or soft hackle according to the water to be fished."

Variation The woolly worm's palmer hackle makes it a separate design. The function, however, is much the same, with stiff

hackle and furry body creating an appearance of life. In western lakes, a green-olive woolly worm with grizzly hackle usually works. Perhaps it panders to the trout's fantasy of a world-record scud. To watch this fly pulsating through clear mountain water is to understand the point about light and motion.

Soft-Hackle Fly This design's hackles usually come from wild birds: hen hackles can be used too but are not as dense. The supple, colorful fibers of game-bird feathers were intended to look like the wings of hatching flies, but they may also represent the legs of nymphs. I like to fish the fly dry -- or damp -- and listed it with the dries in the first edition. I have now moved it for easier comparison with the stiff-hackle wet fly, which looks deceptively similar but (as already noted) is designed for use under different conditions.

Origin The earliest use of soft-hackled flies is probably impossible to pinpoint. It is certainly ancient. In reading authors before W.C. Stewart, however, it is usually difficult to judge how flies of all kinds were fished. Some earlier writers did fish upstream and cross-stream -- at least on occasion -- and they knew that their flies worked best as they drifted, drag-free, just after they landed. Scholars still debate even the broadest point of design: whether the early flies were wet or dry (in modern terms). Feathers, furs, and silk were apparently chosen to imitate a particular insect -- and imitation meant

matching the color.

Stewart broke the mold. He did not fuss over colors, but he wanted the right behavior (not his term). He fished his wet flies upstream whenever possible. And he thought through the problems of design (my term again) as they bore on his method of fishing. "An appearance of life," he wrote in 1857, "may be much better accomplished by dressing the flies of soft materials, which the water can agitate. . . ."

Though Stewart wanted few flies, writers before and after him described many. Pritt's book is, to me, the most appealing of all, though I suppose that we have to judge many of his patterns as art forms, fashioned as much for humans as for trout. Whichever the audience, the flies succeeded. At least they were simple. Elegantly simple, or simply elegant. I admire baroque salmon flies, efficient dry flies -- but the old soft-hackle wet flies were in a class by themselves. A few turns of straw-colored silk, then a feather from the outside of a male dotterel's wing, and you had a fly of deadly beauty.

Soft-hackle wet flies compete with dry flies, in the sense that both are likely to fish well under the same conditions: over trout that are seen to be rising or are willing to rise, often in shallow, fast streams. In the nineteenth century, anglers did not generally know that dry flies would work in rocky streams. A few European anglers have still not figured this out. We learned about the versatility of dry flies early, in this country, and perhaps that is why the soft-hackle wet fly did not catch on

here. But the soft-hackle fly also works well on the surface, and I probably use it most often that way. Skues brought the design to the attention of modern dry-fly and nymph fishers.

Tying Notes There are some special points in tying soft-hackle designs. If the fly is intended to spend most of its time afloat, a tail of stiff hackle fibers helps considerably. I also hackle a floating fly more fully than a sinking one, using up to three feathers if they are very thin.

As a rule, the best system is to tie the hackle feather in by the tip, wind the hackle, and then wind the tying thread through the hackle to reinforce it. Some big feathers lie best if tied in by the butt. Stewart's system makes the strongest fly: he ties on the feather by the tip, spins it around the waxed tying silk, and then winds the two together. J.R. Harris recommends a hatching Iron-Blue Dun with three small jackdaw throat hackles tied Stewart-wise on a true size 17 hook. Every fly-tyer should try this one before awarding himself a master's degree.

The behavior of soft hackles depends on their method of tying. (It is also true of stiff hackles, but to a lesser extent.) At one extreme are Stewart's "spiders," with hackles palmered sparsely over the body. No fiber is supported by any other, so each has maximum flexibility. When the hackle is wound at the shoulder, the fibers give each other some slight support, resisting the current better. The hackle is further propped up if the the final whip-finish is tied behind it, as Skues

recommended. A small ball of dubbing just behind the hackle gives a similar effect. The greatest support of all is provided by a small, stiff hackle wound behind the soft one. This works well for big dry flies; the design is discussed separately as the Bent-Hackle Fly.

Advantages

- + Versatile. Excellent imitation of hatching duns and of many other insects in the surface film, including midge and sedge pupae.
- + Very good hooking qualities.
- + Usually easy to tie (by the first method described).

Disadvantages

- + Fibers collapse when fished downstream.
- + Fragile.
- + Some traditional feathers are scarce (but see Chapter 12 for substitutes).

Conclusions Still an indispensable fly. When trout are taking something mysterious in or just under the surface film, this design is a good starting point. It will usually fool at least one fish for a stomach check.