

THE ORIGINS OF FLYMPH FISHING

by V. S. Hidy

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AS AN INCORRIGIBLE, sentimental angler who has enjoyed the literature and the art of fly fishing for more than forty years, I still take a boyish delight in the beauty of trout streams, the behavior of rainbows and browns and the aquatic insects they eat. When I dress trout flies during the winter (as I will this year) my thoughts go back to Idaho's Silver Creek where the redwings nest and sing in the cattails beside glistening beds of moss; to Oregon's Deschutes River where the brooding cathedral

silences shout at you from the rimrock buttes; and to another favorite but nameless stream where golden wildflowers give all the slopes a splendor in May. I also reminisce, of course, about certain pools and rifles on the Broadhead, Paradise and Neversink where I learned the rudiments of fly fishing during the more leisurely days of the depressed thirties.

The other facets of fly fishing that hold an equal fascination for me are those features of trout flies that appeal to selective feeders, and the most

Medium Hare's Ear

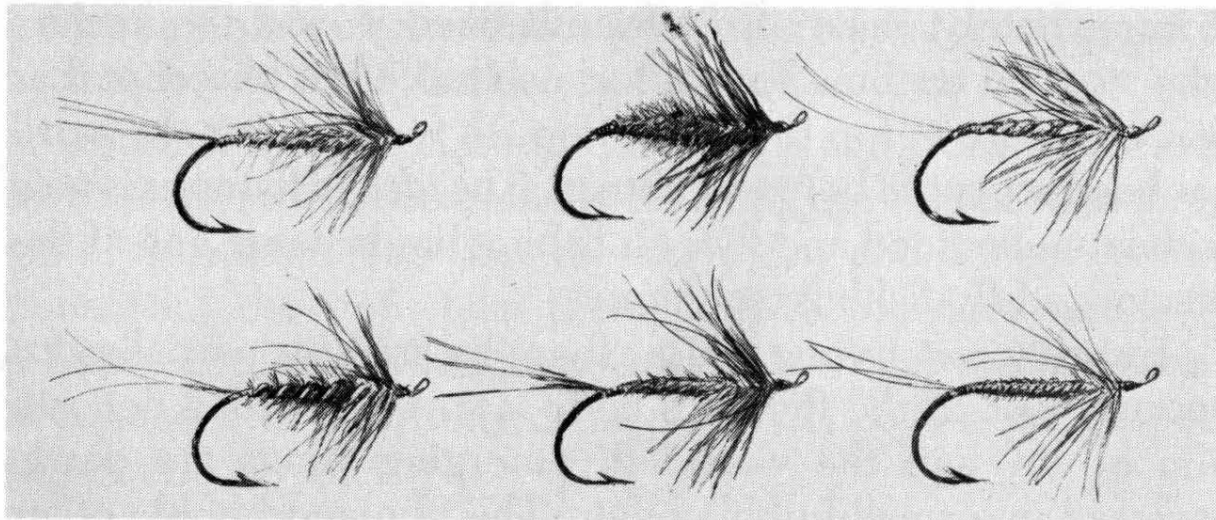
Hare's Face Body
Medium Honey Dun Hackle
Silk: Ash
Gold Wire Rib optional

Brown Hackle

Brown Mohair Body
Golden Badger Hackle
Silk: Crimson or Claret
Rib: Gold Tinsel

Pale Blue Dun

Hare's Cheek Body
Pale Blue Dun Hackle
Silk: Primrose
Gold Wire Rib optional



Dark Hare's Ear

Dark Hare's Ear Body
Dark Honey Dun Hackle
Silk: Ash
Gold Wire or Tinsel
Rib optional

Iron Blue Dun

Mole Body
Starling Hackle
Silk: Crimson or Claret

Blue Dun

Muskrat Body
Blue Dun Hackle
Silk: Primrose

Note: All bodies are spun on the Clark Spinning Block and tapered nicely without a pronounced thorax. Three or four turns of soft hen hackle, always somewhat back over the body as shown.

Sketches by Charles DeFeo.

effective techniques for presenting such flies to the trout.

Through the years, I have enjoyed catching trout on dry flies, wet flies, and nymphs. Much of my most exciting sport, however, has resulted from a simple but finesse-filled strategy I use for trout feeding selectively beneath but near the surface. The technique resembles dry-fly fishing but the soft-hackled flies I use cannot be classified as dry flies. When my fly lights on the surface it is dry, but then I pull it under. It is not a wet fly, however, because it has no wings. And, since it has no nymph-like thorax or wing case, it is not a nymph; furthermore, the hackle fibers are longer and more abundant than G. E. M. Skues, the legendary father of nymph fishing, specified for the orthodox nymph.

My success with these flies in deceiving “problem” fish was quite gratifying but this success created a problem. Other anglers frequently approached me on a stream to ask what pattern of fly I was using. At such times I faced the embarrassment of lying if I simply said, “Oh, this is just a little dark Hare’s Ear . . . or an Iron Blue . . . or a Pale Blue,” according to the trout’s preferences at the time. Such an answer would be nothing more than an unsportsmanlike half-truth because my flies are dressed and fished deliberately to simulate mayflies, caddis flies, and gnats at the moment of their dramatic metamorphosis near the surface when they are neither nymphs nor adult winged flies.

Nevertheless, I found myself using the popular nomenclature and saying, “Oh, this is just a little wet fly I tie to imitate a nymph.”

Several anglers looked at the fly and walked away silently. Others examined the fly, looked at me suspiciously and, in so many words, pointed out that the fly was neither a wet fly nor a nymph.

After several years of struggling with this dilemma, I decided to ‘coin the word “flymph” in 1962. Lee Wulff liked it immediately, most of my friends liked it, and the anglers who stopped me on a stream had no choice but to accept it as part of my answer to their question. In recent years the word has been accepted here and abroad. The *idea* of flymphs is now widely understood and flymph fishing has become one of the recognized fly-fishing techniques.

Entirely *wet* in one sense, flymphs are also partially *dry* because part of the flymph’s body is covered

with a delicate film of air, and the wrinkled, emerging wings are partially enclosed in a small bubble of air. The film and bubble of air capture and radiate light in a manner that trout are familiar with and accept because it is a natural phenomenon. They see it during every hatch of mayflies, caddis flies, and gnats as the nymphal shucks are being detached and the wings are emerging from the wing cases.

The imitation of the film and bubble of air takes us across a new frontier into the fascinating world of mimicry somewhat beyond the conventional wisdom of routine fly dressing. So I call such flies “mimicry flymphs” because they mimic the film of air and the bubble of air that trout often see during the flymphs’ metamorphosis into adult, winged flies.

According to my research, we may now create mimicry flymphs and control the mimicry factor at our leisure with selected dubbings and hackles. Flymphs dressed deliberately to create mimicry appear far more sensuous, if not voluptuous, in simulating the natural hydrofuge (water resistance) of trout stream insects during metamorphosis at the flymph stage of maturity.

Trout have taken mimicry flymphs with such gusto in streams East and West that some sophisticated and experienced anglers have expressed astonishment. It is fair to observe, therefore, that such flymphs can heighten the fly fisherman’s pleasure and feeling of suspense that Viscount Grey once described as “a delicious sense of impending discovery.”

Although the dry fly has given me much pleasure (and always will), I believe the deception of a trout with a flymph is more pure and more complete than that of the dry fly. As the light pours into the clear water, trout may see and examine it with complete clarity without the blurred distortion created by the dry fly’s stiff hackles in the surface film.

You fish flymphs close to the surface and trout take them with visible swirls, occasionally breaking the surface with their tail or dorsal fin. The rises are often slow and deliberate but sometimes the trout take them quickly and dart back into deeper water or a weed bed. Once in a while the fish seem to go mad with a hydrodynamic display of power that snaps a two-pound tippet.

For these reasons (and other marginal considerations), I have found that flymph fishing equals or

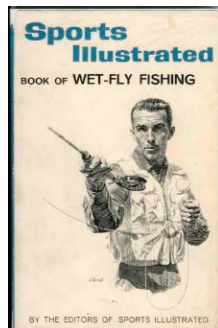
excels dry-fly fishing if you measure your sport in terms of suspense, opportunities for finesse, more subtle rises, and the visual drama of seeing the trout take the fly.

Fishing flymphs and collecting materials for dressing flymphs tends to make one a more versatile angler. Blended dubbings or pure fur dubbings are spun between colored silk threads to create durable tapered bodies. The hackles create subtle color harmonies with the bodies and titillate the trout because the soft hackle fibers move, simulating both the wings and the legs of mature aquatic insects. Ideally, we utilize the principle of synergy in which the total effect is greater than the mere sum of the parts.

One of my angling friends has expressed his appreciation of the new terminology by writing, 'Your term 'flymph fishing' is most appropriate for the method, especially in North America where nymph fishing has come to mean mainly using a weighted nymph on a sinking line, often scraping the bottom. Fishing a flymph in or near the surface film is so much more delicate and pleasurable. '

Another angling friend, a practicing attorney, has pointed out that the flymph exemplifies an old Latin adage used occasionally in legal affairs: *Res Ipsa Loquitur*—The Thing Speaks for Itself.

Additional Fly Patterns Published by Vernon S. Hidy



By the Editors of Sports Illustrated with text by Vernon S. Hidy with Coles Phinizy.

Sports Illustrated Book of Wet-Fly Fishing

J. B. Lippincott Co., Philadelphia and New York, 1961

THREE LEISENRING-STYLE FLY PATTERNS PRESENTED BY V. S. HIDY

BROWN HACKLE

Hook: 12, 14

Silk: claret or maroon

Body: bronze-colored peacock herl (rather than natural green)

Rib: gold tinsel

Hackle: red furnace (with black center and tips, rather than a plain brown hackle)

THE LEISENRING SPIDER

Hook: 12

Silk: primrose

Body: hare's ear spun on primrose

Rib: gold wire

Hackle: brown partridge

THE HARE'S EAR FLY

Hook: 12

Silk: primrose

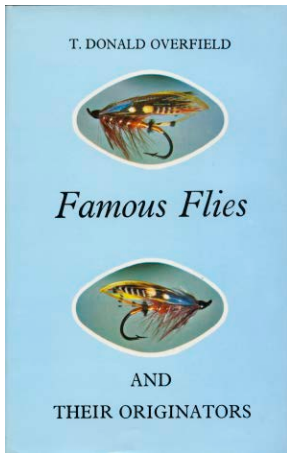
Body: hare's ear spun on primrose (as in the Spider)

Rib: gold tinsel (as in the Brown Hackle)

Wings: $\frac{3}{16}$ -inch-wide swatches of matching fibers taken from two woodcock feathers.

Hackle: none

Tail: two or three fibers of mandarin duck



From: T. Donald Overfield

Famous Flies and their Originators

Adam & Charles Black, London, 1972
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A SELECTION OF FLIES BY V. S. HIDY

(All these patterns are dressed "flymph" style)

BLUE DUN (LIGHT)

Hook: 13, 14 or 15. Long shank mayfly.
Silk: Primrose.
Body: White fox fur blended with hare's cheek fur.
Rib: Gold wire (optional).
Hackle: Light blue-dun or starling feather from the marginal coverts.
Whisks: Light blue-dun hackle fibers.

BLUE DUN (MEDIUM)

Hook: 14, 15 or 16. Long shank mayfly.
Silk: Primrose.
Body: Muskrat fur blended with blue wool dubbing.
Rib: Gold wire (optional).
Hackle: Medium blue-dun or starling feather from the marginal coverts.
Whisks: Medium blue-dun hackle fibers.

IRON BLUE DUN

Hook: 14, 15 or 16. Long shank mayfly.
Silk: Claret or black.
Body: Mole fur on claret or black silk.
Hackle: Dark blue-dun, starling or coot.
Whisks: Dark blue-dun hackle fibers.

TUPS INDISPENSABLE

Hook: 13, 14 or 15. Long shank mayfly.
Silk: Primrose.
Body: Pink and yellow wool mixed with a small pinch of hare's cheek fur.
Hackle: Medium honey-dun or rusty blue-dun.
Whisks: Honey-dun

BLUE-WINGED OLIVE

Hook: 14. Long shank mayfly.
Silk: Primrose or green.
Body: Green wool and olive seal's fur.
Hackle: Medium blue-dun.
Whisks: Blue-dun hackle fibers.

PALE EVENING DUN

Hook: 14, 15 or 16. Long shank mayfly.
Silk: Primrose or white.
Body: Creamy-red fox fur.
Hackle: Pale honey-dun.
Whisk: Pale honey-dun.

CAHILL (LIGHT)

Hook: 12, 14 or 16. Long shank mayfly.
Silk: White or primrose.
Body: Hare's cheek fur mixed with creamy fox fur.
Hackle: Ginger.
Whisks: Ginger.

MARCH BROWN

Hook: 10 or 12. Long shank mayfly.
Silk: Orange.
Body: Hare's poll fur and orange-brown wool.
Rib: Primrose silk or gold wire.
Hackle: Brown partridge.
Whisks: Brown partridge.

HARE'S EAR SEDGE

Hook: 13, 14 or 15. Round bend.
Silk: Ash or gray.
Body: Hare's ear and hare's poll fur.
Rib: Narrow gold tinsel.
Hackle: Medium to dark blue-dun.
Whisks: Blue-dun.

BLACK GNAT

Hook: 14, 16 or 18. Round bend.

Silk: Gray.

Body: Three strands from the crow wing feather.

Hackle: Purplish starling neck hackle.

Whisks: None.

BROWN HACKLE

Hook: 12, 14 or 16. Wide gape.

Silk: Claret.

Body: Brown mohair blended with fur from the hare's poll.

Rib: Narrow gold tinsel.

Hackle: Brown badger hen or golden furnace.

Whisks: None.

STONE FLY

Hook: 8, 10 or 12. Mustad 2X or 3X long.

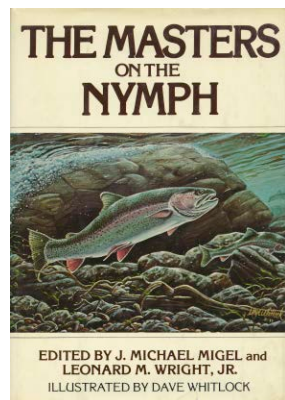
Silk: Orange.

Body: Orange-yellow dubbing of wool mixed with fur from the hare's poll.

Ribbing hackle: Dark honey.

Head hackle: Dark cream or dark Cree grizzly.

Whisks: None.



From: Migel, J. Michael and Wright, Leonard M.

The Masters on the Nymph

Nick Lyons Books, Doubleday & Co., Garden City,
New York, 1979

FOUR FAVORITE FLYMPH PATTERNS

BY V. S. HIDY

CADDIS—PARTRIDGE AND HARE'S EAR

Hook: 14, 16

Silk: ash

Body: hare's poll on ash silk

Rib: gold wire

Hackle: one or two turns of partridge neck hackle
slightly longer than hook

MAYFLY—HONEY DUN

Hook: 12, 14, 16

Silk: ash

Body: hare's poll or face on ash silk

Rib: gold wire

Hackle: two turns of honey dun hen

BLUE DUN

Hook: 12, 14, 16

Silk: primrose

Body: muskrat on primrose

Rib: olive-yellow silk

Hackle: two turns of blue dun hen

IRON BLUE DUN

Hook: 16, 18

Silk: crimson

Body: mole on crimson, with two turns of bare silk
before the body is tied

Rib: none

Hackle: one or two turns of starling neck hackle