

Phil's Flybox

By Phil Rowley

The Parachute Adams

This month's fly pattern is a parting gift of sorts to outgoing editor Ken Wagner. Ken, like a number of other members, was always asking if I would feature a dry fly such as the Parachute Adams, as this is one of Ken's all time favorites - especially on the Skagit. I would like to thank Ken for his support, patience and willingness to traverse the lower mainland. Ensuring my column made it into every issue over the past two years. Ken or Mr. Wagner as I christened him would diplomatically chase me to meet his deadlines. You see at times I tend to procrastinate. It's something I have intended to put and end to but I just never get around to it! So Ken, this month's pattern is for you and all other followers of the Parachute Adams.

Len Halladay designed the Adams in 1922. Angling friend Charles Adams used the Adams as he plied the Broadman River. The popularity of the Adams has grown to the point that it is the number one dry fly for many anglers in still and moving waters. The universal appeal of the Adams has fooled trout worldwide no matter how big the insect or what hatch was underway. The Adams is an excellent Callibaetis imitation. It belongs in every angler's dry fly box.

Parachute patterns have become popular with just about every angler I talk to. Parachute designs land upright and offer a realistic profile to the fish. Not as proportionally taxing as traditional upwing dry flies, parachutes give fly tyers a little more breathing room at the vise. About the only trick to master is forming the parachute hackle itself. A good parachute hackle begins with a sound base.

For the parachute Adams I begin by tying in the wing post. Like most tyers I originally used white calf tail for the wing. As most of us know calf tail can be unruly at times demanding utmost thread discipline. I have since begun using white poly yarn for the wing. Poly yarn or Phentex is hydrophobic, meaning it repels water. Since floatation is a primary consideration of any dry fly the introduction of poly yarn seemed to be natural. Poly yarn requires no stacking of materials and is easy to work with.

Tie the wing in about 25-30% back from the eye of the hook. Once tied in, stand the single wing upright and secure. Post the wing by winding the tying thread around the base of the wing horizontally. Build up the wing base slightly higher than you think as the body of the fly obscures most of the posting wraps. With the wing in place continue the balance of the dressing. For me this means tying in the tail. I prefer stiff moose body hair fibers for my Parachute Adams. Moose body hair tails support the fly in a wide variety of water conditions. The original Adams used a mixture of grizzly and brown hackle fibers. The choice is yours.

With the tail in place dub a slender body to the front of the wing post. Select and prepare the hackle. Most tiers recommend using a hackle feather that is one size larger than the hook being tied upon. For instance a size 12 pattern would use a hackle feather normally reserved for a traditional size 10 dry fly. Tie the hackle in front of the wing post with the shiny or most prominently marked side of the feather facing upwards. This ensures the finished hackle will help support the fly on the water as the individual fibers will naturally resist collapse.

Wind the hackle *counter clockwise* around the wing post. Place each wrap directly *underneath* the previous one. Winding the hackle counter clockwise the securing wraps of thread will tend to pull the hackle feathers tighter around the wing post. Once wound use your hackle pliers as a weight keeping the hackle honest. Sweep the hackle out of harm's way and tie off. Most tyers ask, "How many wraps of hackle should I use?" For fast choppy water I use 4 to 5 more wraps, while for stillwaters 2 or 3 does the trick. Once tied off trim any errant or offending hackle fibers. A rotary vise of some kind makes trimming easier. Continue the balance of the fly sweeping the fibers out of the way as necessary. Don't worry about abusing the fly at the vise after all you are going to ask a fish to come up and chew it to bits. For a final touch of security place a dab of head cement at the base of the wing. I prefer a watery consistency to my head cement so it will flow into the hackle.

The prominent white wing of the Parachute Adams is a real standout. The fish don't mind the hi visibility wind post one bit. Some might argue they don't see it at all. I lean towards this theory. Viewed from below the fly leaves an imprint of a natural mayfly that most trout find hard to resist. Try a Parachute Adams during the next Callibaetis emergence or Green Drake hatch on the Skagit. Chances are you will do well.

The Parachute Adams

Hook: Tiemco 100 or 101 #8-#18
 Thread: Black
 Tail: Moose Body Hair
 Body: Muskrat Grey Dubbing
 Wing: White Poly Yarn or Calf Tail
 Hackle: Mix of Grizzly and Brown Hackle

Step 1

Place the hook into the vise and cover the front half of the hook with thread. Advance the thread forward half way up the basic wrap. This method makes it easy to place the wing correctly the first time. Measure the wing so it is shank length. Tie in the wing making by placing each securing wrap of thread directly behind the previous one. This ensures that the wing will not get shortened and the head will remain clear.



Step 2

Stand the wing upright by placing thread wraps tightly in front. Post the wing by wrapping the tying thread horizontally around the base. The tying thread should cover the base of the wing completely.



Step 3

Measure and tie in the tail so it is shank length.



Step 4

Dub a slender body up to the front of the wing



Step 5

Tie in one grizzly and one brown hackle at the same time. In front of the wing so the tips point out the far side of the fly. The shiny side of the feather should be facing up.



Step 6

Wind the hackle together using your hands in a counter clockwise direction placing each wrap of hackle directly below the previous one. Use a pair of hackle pliers as a weight to hold the wrapped hackles in place. Sweep the parachute hackle up out of the way and tie off. Trim the excess hackle tips.



Step 7

Trim any errant hackle fibers. Continue dubbing the balance of the fly. Form a neat head and whip finish. Place a securing dab of head cement at the base of the wing. Allow the head cement to flow into the hackles.



Got a favorite pattern you would like to share with fellow club members? Please let me know and I will feature it in a future issue. - Phil

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