

Fred Steynberg's Spider

by Ed Herbst

Professional fly fishing guides like Fred Steynberg of Rhodes often find that they have to return after a hard day on the river and replenish their fly stocks overnight in preparation for the next day's trip.

This requires flies that are, above all, successful fish catchers and, almost as important, are quick to tie.

By combining the movement and seductive speckling of a parachute partridge hackle, and the shine of a blue dun hackle tied beneath it to strengthen and support it, Fred has created a winning Klinkhamer-style emerger and a foam-bodied arachnid imitation that qualify as truly indigenous patterns.

Fred says that the idea for his spider pattern came after finding it in the contents of a trout from the Bell River in Rhodes.

"Trout on our freestone streams do not usually have access to regular hatches and are, accordingly, opportunistic feeders that prey on many different terrestrial and aquatic food sources," Fred says.

"Spiders are not as plentiful as mayflies, midges or caddis, but when they are swept away by currents after landing up in the water, will be taken as food. The stomach contents of trout taken in Rhodes, Barkly East and Maclear have revealed signs of sporadic spider catches.

"Spiders that fall into the water from streamside vegetation do not swim out of a current, but will usually wait until pushed onto some vegetation before climbing out of the water. Aquatic spiders, though, can run across the water with surprising ease and even swim underwater.

"To build a buoyant spider pattern that will be recognised as such by trout, I use a soft foam spider body that can be cut from closed cell foam or bought in pre cut shape. These pre-cut foam bug bodies are available from Wapsi, <http://www.wapsify.com/bb.html>

"The foam is tied as an extended body at the bend of #14 – 16 fine wire hook sedge hook such as the Grip. To make the fly more visible, translucent ethafoam packaging material is tied in slightly behind the hook eye to provide a support post for the partridge and dun rooster hackles which will be wound around it, parachute style. The thorax of the spider beneath the double parachute hackle is covered with black or brown CDC dubbing to add to the buoyancy of the fly. A black or dark dun cock hackle, 'under hackle', is firstly tied in around the post. This hackle should be sparse – no more than two wraps - and the fibres should be just longer than the gape measurement of the hook.

"The legs of the spider are imitated with a brown partridge hackle sparsely wrapped



The stomach contents of a rainbow trout caught on the Bell River in Rhodes by Fred Steynberg showing the remains of a Wolf Spider.

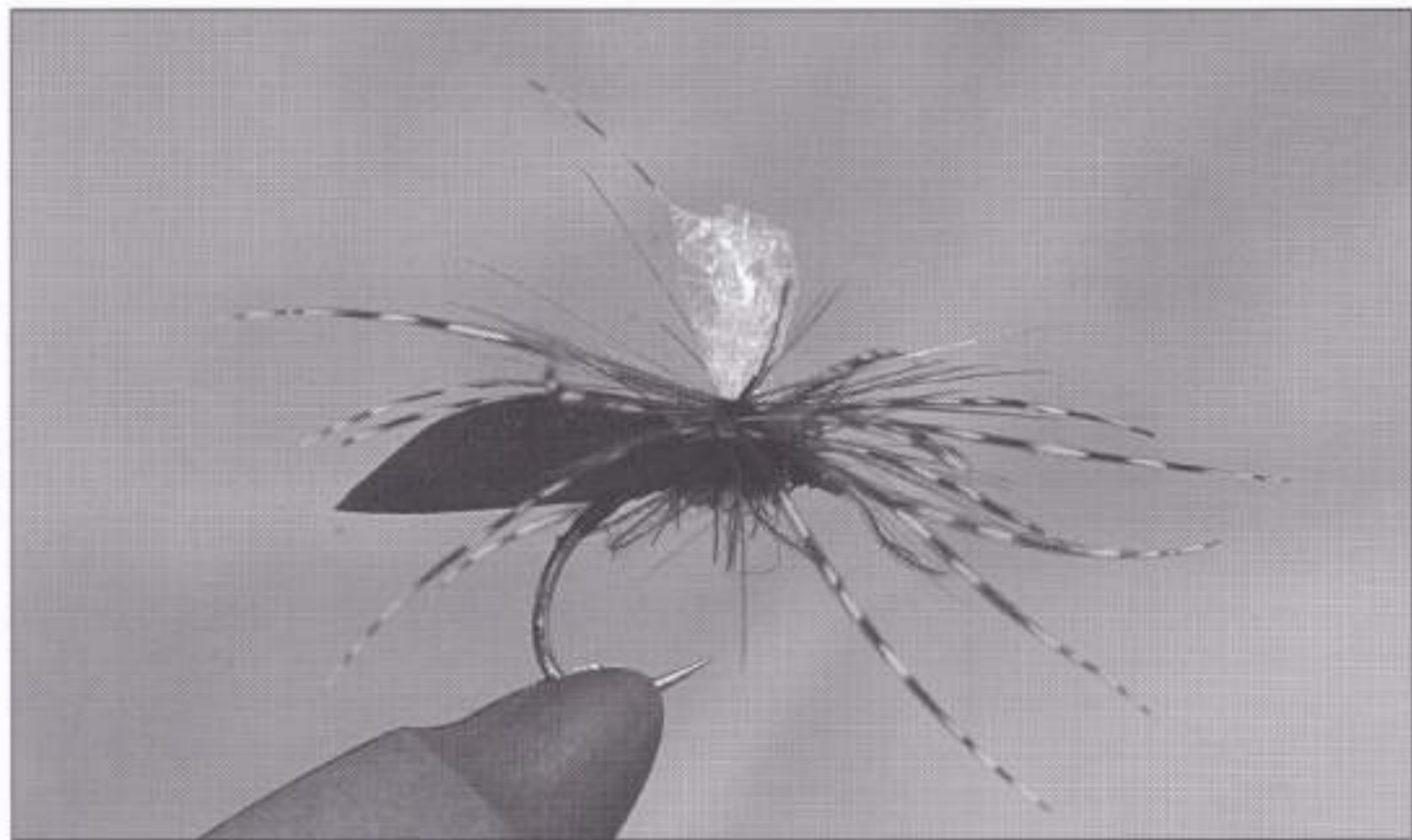
above the rooster hackle and it is necessary to tie it in with the shiny side of the feather facing upwards so that the hackle tips droop enticingly into the water. The legs should be about 15 – 20mm long. After tying the fly, I pre-treat it with a silicone-based floatant like Loon Hydrostop or Watershed," Fred said.

To make Fred's spider pattern more visible, I create a hole in the abdomen with a needle and then push a loop of wire through the hole from beneath. Orange antron or glo-bug yarn is then threaded through the wire loop and pulled downwards through the foam body, leaving a tuft protruding from the top. The excess yarn is clipped from the bottom of the foam body and the hole sealed with superglue.

Fred says he got the idea of the dual hackle from Tom Sutcliffe at one of the annual fly fishing clinics he runs in Rhodes.

I first saw the idea of a small hackle supporting a larger one in a Variant/RAB – type pattern in the British magazine, *Trout and Salmon*, about a decade ago. Tom Sutcliffe then used this feature in a Coq de Leon hackled Klinkhamer which proved exceptionally effective on the Holsloot and the pattern was detailed on pages 25 – 27 of the 2000 issue of *Piscator*.

Tom says the fly he tied in Rhodes, and which he believes Fred used as the genesis for his partridge-hackled Klinkhamer and spider patterns, had a small partridge hackle beneath a very big Coq de Leon hackle – a sequence which Fred has reversed in his deadly and subsequently developed flies.



Two views of Fred Steynberg's double hackle spider imitation which has proved exceptionally effective on trout streams in the north eastern Cape Drakensberg mountain range.

