

LEGEND OF THE DDD

by Tom Sutcliffe

If it is properly tied the DDD looks at first glance as if it's got no chance of catching trout at all.

Unlike other more elegant dry flies, that look balanced and sit up pertly on the water, the DDD is ungainly.

Nevertheless, as a catcher of trout on Natal's still waters, there is not another dry fly that comes within a country mile of it.

What the trout take it for is anybody's guess, but if you want mine, I'd say it represents a large terrestrial insect of sorts, most likely a grasshopper or moth.

I tied the prototype in November, 1976, to imitate a particularly heavy fall of large beetles that I bumped into on the Umgeni, which drove first the trout and then me, quite mad.

I had nothing that matched them, and as Mackereth's Caribou Spider was still fresh in my memory in those days, I tied up a bulky beetle using klipspringer hair with a sparse brown hackle up front as legs in an attempt to match it. Even without a tail it didn't look very different from the now legendary dry fly.

But in considering the origins of the DDD and ascribing it to myself, let me hastily add that I'm on thin ice and I know it. Bill Duckworth, after whom the fly is named, got me greatly confused when he drew my attention to his article in the *Creel* of Autumn, 1979, describing the DDD as a modification of an English deer-hair dry fly, that I'd made for him using klipspringer hair. Perhaps that's where my prototype got its tail.

Be that as it may, Bill fished it regularly on a piece of Dargle still water with such energy, enthusiasm and obvious success, that we all sat up and took notice. From then on it became known as Duckworth's Dargle Delight.

The first thing to know about the DDD is that it fishes well on rivers and lakes, although in Natal it made more of a mark for itself as a still water fly, than as a catcher of stream trout. I've got no doubt that if it got more exposure on rivers, the scores would even up.

For the average fly fisherman the whole concept of using a dry fly on a lake needs a bit of getting used to, especially when there are no obvious rises. I say no obvious rises because, in windy conditions, the surface of the water is choppy and rises can go unnoticed or undetected.

This is perhaps why the DDD appears to do best on breeze-ruffled water, when feeding fish easily escape notice. Allied to this, the fish know they are less exposed and vulnerable under a broken surface and will then often cruise and feed boldly in the upper layers of the lake.

When there are no rises to guide the angler to fish, the DDD is often cast onto the water at random in the hope that some unwary trout will happen to see it.

This is not necessarily a bad tactic, providing the angler moves his position from time to time. He is then doing what many successful wetfly and nymph fishermen do all day long and that is to prospect with a fly until they find trout.

Having used a DDD in just this way for a number of years, two things now strike me. The first is that the fish will often come up to it from deep water in the middle of the day, especially if conditions are bright and windy.

The second is that the DDD will often work at a time when sub-surface fishing is producing nothing, so that on a difficult day, a switch to the DDD can swiftly ring the changes in your favour.

There are, of course, plenty of problems inherent in fishing a floating fly blind on still water. As far as where to fish the fly is concerned, we have made mention of prospecting, but we should add that deep water off weed patches is nearly always the most productive.

Let's add to this two other productive zones: where wind lanes form and where calm, smooth water joins the rippled water. In the evenings and in overcast, drizzly conditions, the shallows and fringes come into their own and it's often a good idea now to wade in waist-deep and fish the fly back along the shoreline!

As a rule the less you disturb the water with unnecessary casting (and the less you false cast over holding water) the better.

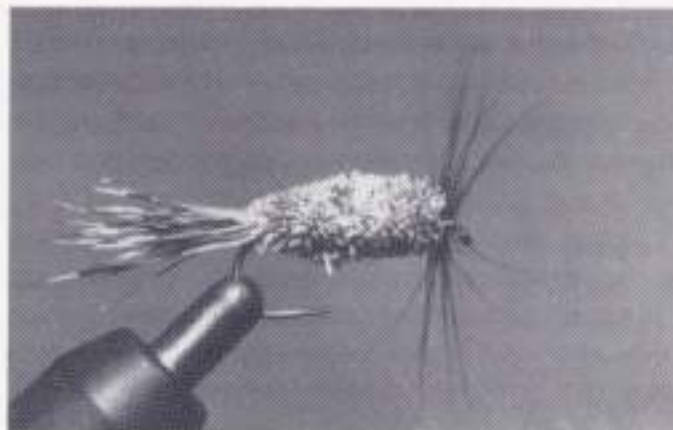
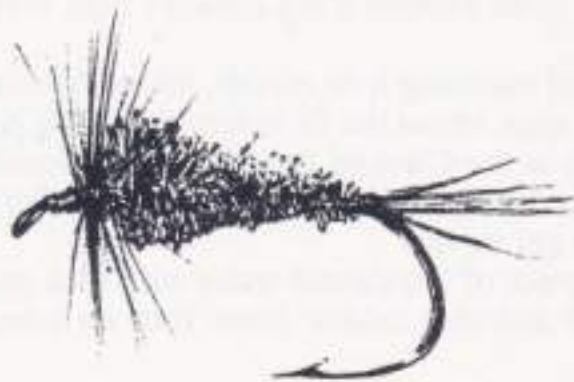
Also remember that giving the fly the odd twitch with rod tip movement very often triggers the trout to take.

The DDD is not my first choice fly to throw at rising still water trout. If there is a lot of surface feeding activity, it's wiser to identify the hatch and then match it.

Rather, I see the DDD in the role of a terrestrial imitation, and because the terrestrials are largely daylight creatures whose presence on water comes about more by chance than by design, they are a surprise to the trout and, I suspect, something of a rare treat.

In fact, the terrestrial theory matches much of what we've learned about the way of fish with a DDD: that it is best in the morning sunshine when these insects are most active; that it is best in gusty conditions when they are most likely to get blown in; and that, far from putting the trout off, giving the fly a twitch helps create the illusion of a struggling terrestrial and brings the fish on.

This article is one of seventy five chapters in Tom Sutcliffe's new book "Reflections on Flyfishing". An application form for its purchase is included with this issue.



The DDD as sketched by Tom Sutcliffe and tied by the editor.