

The Wolf Spider

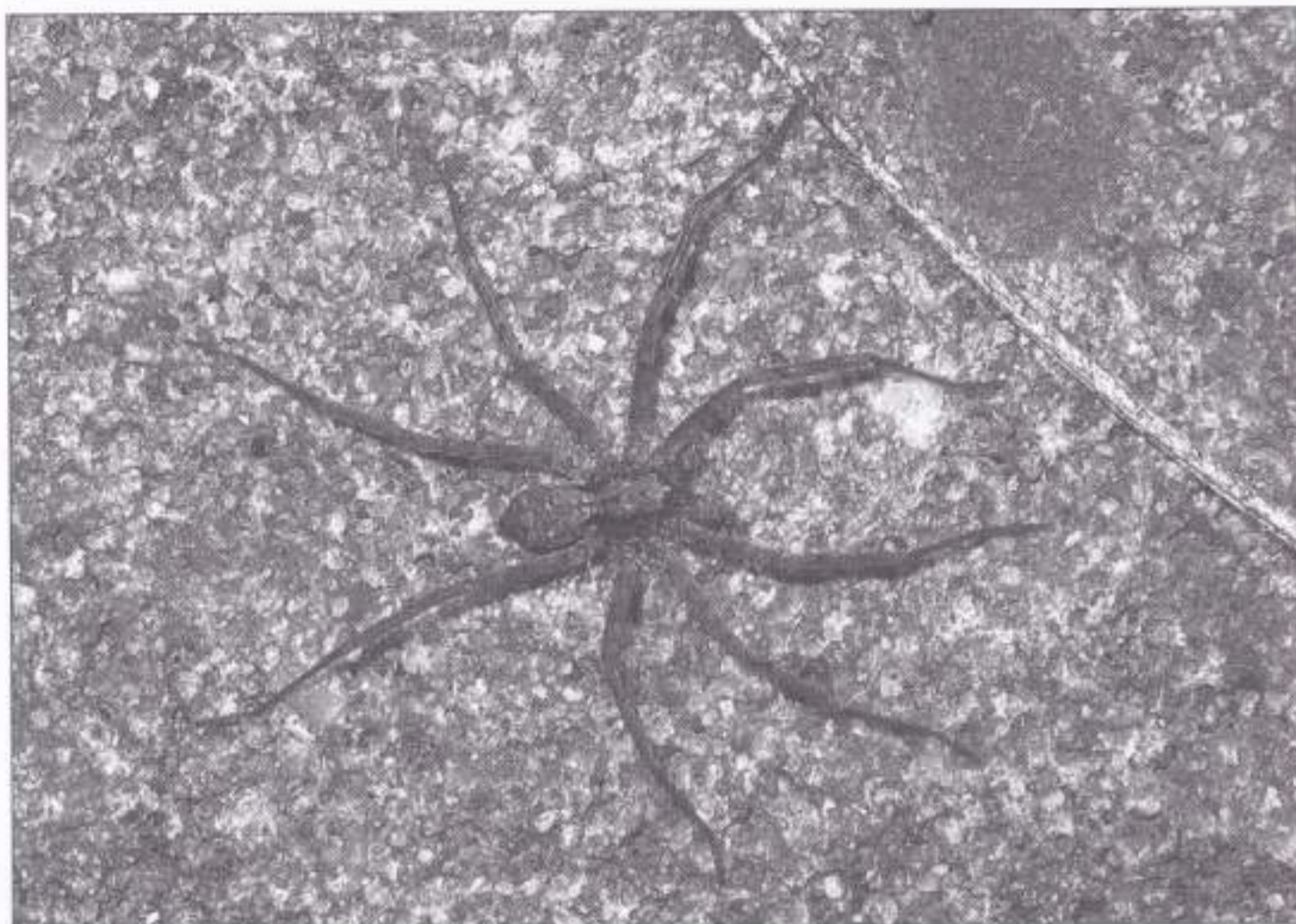
by Leonard Flemming

What makes us decide to tie a new fly pattern? The ones we dream about often prove unproductive. Let's face it, flies don't just happen, not in my case anyway. I need inspiration to tie something new. This usually takes place in a series of sensible events; an insect is spotted on a particular river or in an area of a river, trout are observed feeding on it and the imitation jumps to mind. Simple as that? Not quite.

Once you've found an insect trout regard as a delicacy, you study it carefully. The size, colour and shape are important, as important as the organism's behaviour, or drift in terms of stream fishing, I would say. Then comes the time of day, or season; and who says the trout will like your artificial version of the insect anyway? Hence, you often need to tie a few different patterns, try them all during the course of a season and then decide if you have been successful. It is not always insects that inspire us, often, it is an existing pattern we find fascinating. We tamper with them to suit our own style of tying, to the extent that existing patterns often look entirely different to the original once they have emerged from our vises.

I enjoy creating my own flies, especially floating patterns because there's just something special about small stream dry flies. I recall an incident while fishing a small Cape stream during the late season. Settled next to a decent pool I found myself fumbling in my fly box after a 10 inch rainbow had refused my fly. To put things in perspective, a double figure day on this stream at this time of year is special and a 10 inch fish a treasure! After selecting a fly, I watched the pale figure of the trout glide to and fro in the current while tying the fly to my tippet. A movement to the right of the inlet caught my eye and almost instantly the trout leapt clear of the water and grabbed a long-jawed water spider - that was dangling by its silken thread from a streamside bush - in mid air! The trout did then take my fly, a #18 Elk Hair Stimulator although not as convincingly, however, as it had nailed the spider!

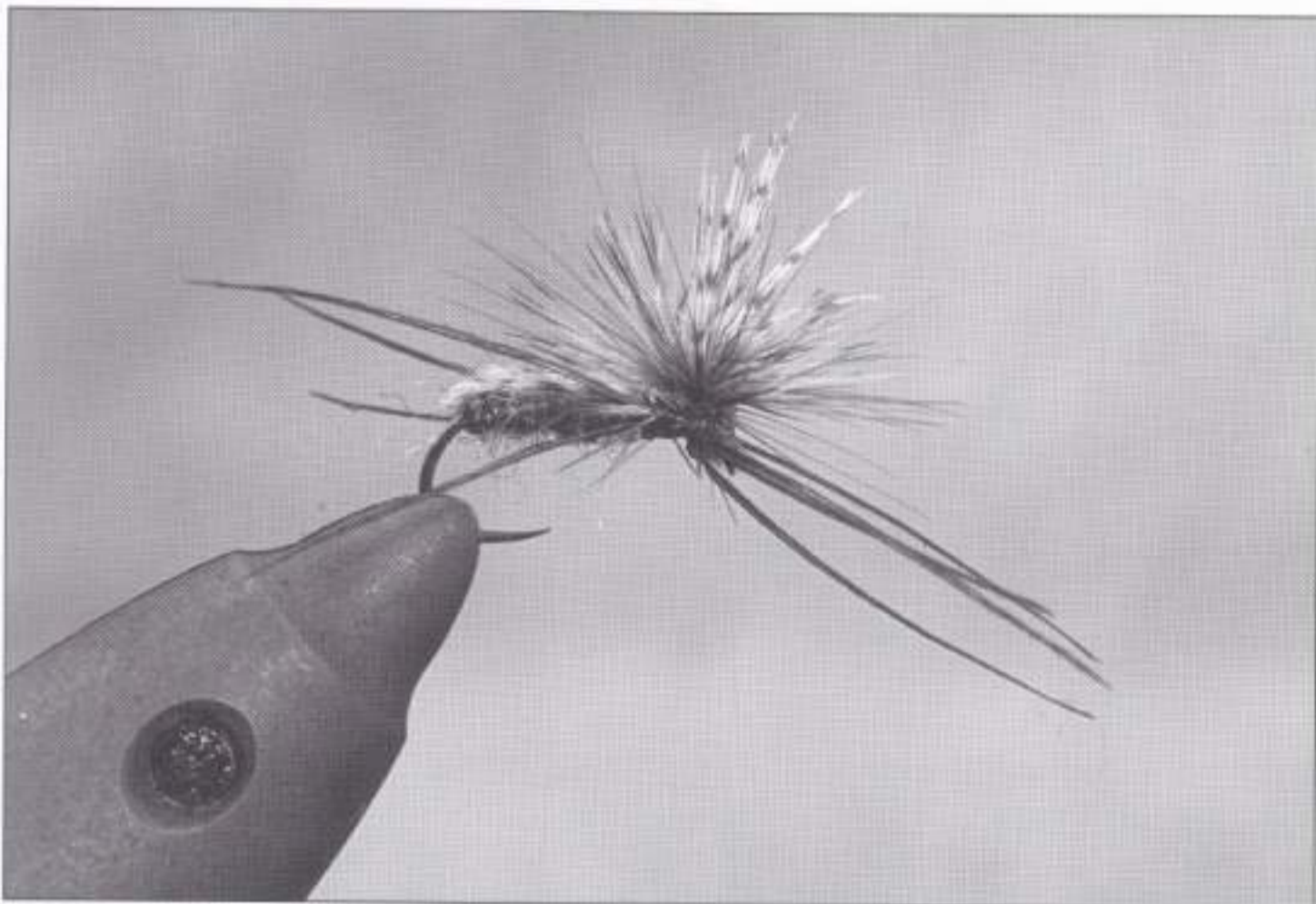
After observing this scenario, I tied two true spider imitations, one resembling long-jawed water spiders (*Tetragnatha* species from the family Tetragnathidae) and the other Wolf Spiders and fishing spiders (of the families Lycosidae and Pisauridae, respectively) and put them to the test. Both worked exceptionally well. What was particularly evident was the aggressive nature of the takes I got on these flies. I have fished both patterns with great success on many Cape streams, including the Kwaai and Keurbooms near Knysna. Both browns and rainbows readily accept them and often swim long distances to intercept these flies. Recently I have had the opportunity to test the Wolf Spider on the Bushmans and Mooi Rivers in the Natal Drakensberg mountain range. On a trip to the Bushmans with Peter Brigg and Pieter 'Seun' Taljaard, numerous fish fell to the Wolf Spider. Although the Mooi River is not regarded a dry fly stream, I managed to land several good fish on the Wolf Spider during an evening rise. This was not surprising, since Wolf Spiders are widespread with many species present throughout South Africa. Although some *Pardosa* spp. are semi-aquatic, a diversity of Wolf Spiders is usually abundant in our stream environments and are often spotted on the banks while fishing. Due to the wide distribution



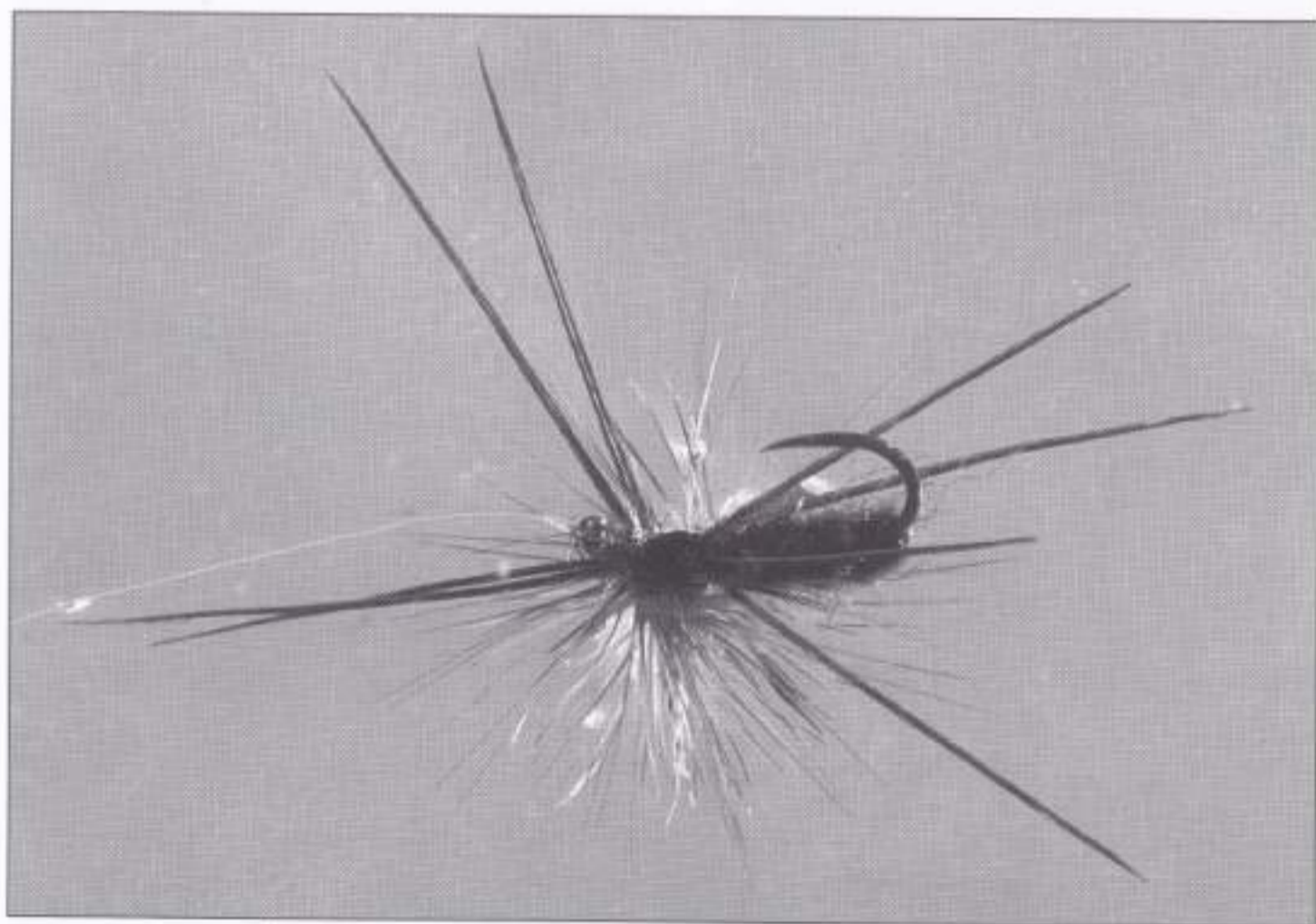
The Wolf Spider's cryptic colouring provides a suitable camouflage against its predators but, from below, its distinctive silhouette is unmistakable to trout.



Leonard Flemming with a Witels stream brown trout that was deceived by his Wolf Spider pattern.



The late Gary La Fontaine said that wide dry fly patterns tempted deep-holding trout to rise and Leonard Flemming's Wolf Spider meets this criterion.



The Wolf Spider – photographed in a slant tank – gives an impression from the trout's perspective.

of these spiders, the Wolf Spider remains my favourite of the two imitations. I've lost count of trout I have caught on this fly and believe it would work well on most streams excelling, I have found, when trout are wary or selective.

The Wolf Spider

Hook::	Grip dry fly 11011BL, #16
Thread:	14/0, Gordon Griffiths Sheer, black
Abdomen:	Black foam covered with thin layer of hare's ear dubbing, with Egyptian goose (or partridge) chest feather fibres folded over the top (tied in first, at the bend of the hook)
Legs:	Four pheasant tail fibres, two pairs each side facing backwards and forwards, respectively
Parachute:	Egyptian goose chest feather fibres
Hackle:	One grizzly hackle (wrapped in first) and one brown hackle (wet the base of the post with varnish before spinning the hackle around the post)



A Keurbooms stream rainbow trout caught on a Wolf Spider pattern. Photo Billy de Jong.

"A trout lives in a secret world. It is a small world in which many dramatic events are played out in water obscurity, veiled from the keenest eyes."

Vincent Marinaro