

# The Yarn Spider

by Keith Wallington

In early 2007 I moved from South Africa to southeast England. A few months later a friend and I were due to spend a week in central Wales focusing on the myriad streams and rivers that are full of grayling and brown trout. A few weeks before we set off I was looking through my flies one evening as I built a list of what I needed to tie to prepare for a week in the water. The usual suspects were listed: nymphs, caddis larvae and pupae, mayfly adults, emergers etc. As I was 'fresh off the boat' I was not yet familiar with the entomology of southern UK beyond what I had read and what I had noticed around the farm and in the stream outside the kitchen door. Also, I realised a gap in my dry fly box was a rugged, buoyant, quick-to-tie, general terrestrial pattern. In the past I have used stimulators a lot and I felt like a change.

Since moving to the UK I have been amazed at how many spiders there are in the UK, especially in summer, around the water's edge. I thought a spider pattern might be an interesting challenge. After mulling this over for a few days I created a two-material, two-stage pattern that meets the brief. For buoyancy I turned to the same yarn I've used for decades on the Vaal River in South Africa, 'Egg Yarn'. For legs I borrowed an idea from my friend Steve Thornton's KAM Emerger where he uses partridge in a parachute style to represent a very buggy spread of legs. A few dozen wild brownies in a small stream in Wales one day that July confirmed the Yarn Spider was a winner. The yarn spider actually represents a range of terrestrial bugs. I have shared it with hundreds of tyers across the UK and Europe at various shows and the feedback has been remarkable: a lot of fly fishers have tried the pattern with great success and I have been invited to fish some amazing rivers as a result.

The tying is extremely simple. There are two materials:

Egg yarn (I use black primarily and it is very visible in all light conditions)

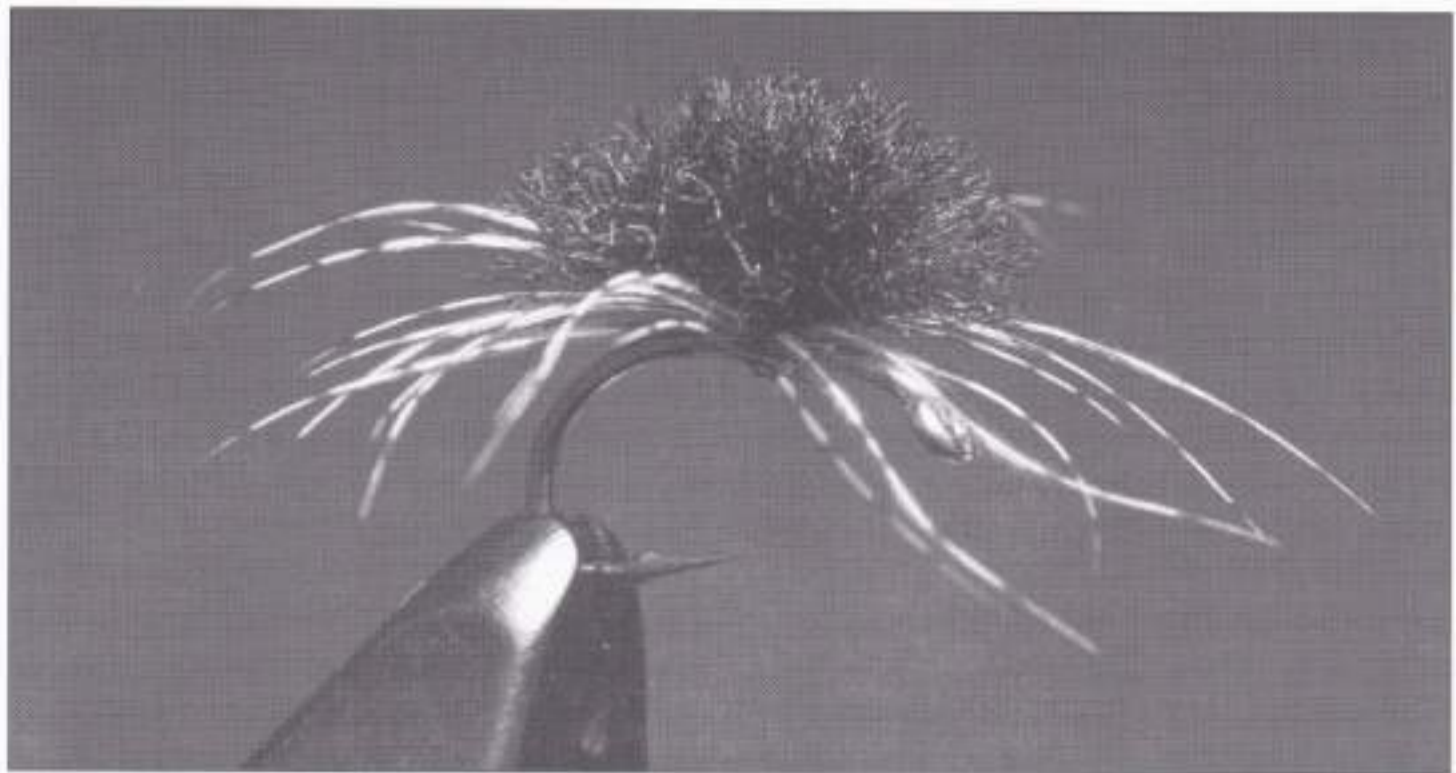
A medium to small feather from the neck of a pheasant.

I use light-wire, size 14-18 scud or curved shank emerger hooks.

For thread I pretty much tie all my flies with Uni Trico 17/0. It's very thin, can be placed very precisely, is pretty strong and results in almost no bulking when you need a few extra turns.

## Tying the Yarn Spider

1. Take 3-5 overlapping turns of thread at the centre of the hook shank.
2. Cut a 5cm length of egg yarn and separate into two equally thick halves
3. Tie the middle of the yarn to the top of the shank by holding the yarn parallel to the shank and taking one loose and then two to four tight turns on top of each other. The tie-in area must be no wider than a turn or two of thread.
4. Pull both sides of the yarn upright and take three to four turns of thread around the base



*Keith Wallington's simple yet effective Yarn Spider.*

of the yarn above the shank. This ensures the yarn does not slide around the shank when fishing.

5. Select a pheasant neck feather with fibres two to three times the length of the shank.
6. Strip the fibres off one side of the feather and, while holding the very tip of the feather, pull the fibres toward the base of the feather.
7. Tie the tip of the feather to the top of the hook shank immediately behind the yarn tie-in point.
8. Attach your hackle plier to quill base of the pheasant feather and, applying very gentle tension to the feather, take two turns around the base of the yarn in the parachute hackle style. Tie down and trim off the excess feather.
9. Tie off the thread underneath the hackle, tight against the front of the yarn without trapping any pheasant feather fibres.
10. Turn the fly over in the vice (a good rotary vice is helpful here) or just remove and re-insert the hook inverted.
11. Apply a flexible cement to the underside of the tie-in area of the yarn and hackle stem. You should cement the small circular area that covers the hackle stem and underside of the yarn tie-in point. This is the 'trout proofing' step - important if you catch small wild browns with sharp teeth.
12. Return the fly to the upright position.
13. Pull the yarn upward quite tightly with your non-scissor hand and trim the yarn a third to half shank length in height. You'll need to experiment with this until you are happy with the size of body or 'pom pom' that is created. You must make the cut with a single action of the scissors or the resulting body will be uneven.
14. Treat the flies with Loon Hydrostop after tying. This adds to buoyancy.

The first time I fished the Yarn Spider a few summers back in Wales I fished a single fly all day, taking dozens of small browns, without the fly losing its buoyancy. The Yarn Spider must be the quickest, simplest pattern I have ever developed and yet it catches fish very consistently, often out-fishing much more imitative and complex 'hatch matchers'. Give it a try.