



THE HiVIS CDC MIDGE

Darryl Lampert



Fly tying is not something I ever thought I would be able to do. With hands that are probably better suited to manual labour, and eyes dulled from years of staring at a computer, I shied away from fly tying for nearly ten years before plucking up the courage to finally try. The fly tying kit that I bought for my wife, Philippa, in the hope that she would tie me some flies, sat unopened in my cupboard gathering dust. I eventually dusted it off and sat down with Sean Mills who patiently helped me tie my first RAB. I later attended fly tying classes with Tim Rolston at Ultimate Angling in Cape Town where I learnt the correct techniques for tying better flies. After that I was privileged to spend many hours with Tom Sutcliffe whose lessons were invaluable in improving my skills and enjoyment of both tying and fishing. Ed Herbst inspired me over the years and kept me questioning and exploring new flies, materials, methods and techniques. I have subsequently spent many hours on the river and probably many more sharing bottles of red wine with the odd bit of fly tying thrown in, with one of the true masters of the art – MC Coetzer. Forgive me for including these names - it is not meant as name-dropping, but rather as acknowledgement and thanks. They have all unselfishly shared their time and expertise, which has greatly enhanced my own enjoyment of fly tying and in turn fly fishing.

When I started tying, durability and proportion proved difficult to achieve. Once I had attained a reasonable proficiency at these skills, I grappled with tying the perfect imitation – and lost. I moved on to creating the ultimate fly



that would always catch fish. It took me several years to realise that no such fly exists – at least not from my vice. However, failures in fishing and fly tying lead to constant innovation and experimentation. I learnt little from the multi-fly days but lots from the multi-fly changes. Bugginess and movement always seemed to trump symmetry and perfect imitation. When fly tying is unencumbered by the need to produce, it is very relaxing. Accompanied by a glass of red wine and some good music, it is close to perfection in this regard. The fish, as always, are the eventual breathalyser test.



The HiVis CDC Midge tied by its originator Darryl Lampert to imitate the natural insects often experienced on local streams

The HiVis CDC Midge started out as an attempt to match a pattern that I watched MC Coetzer demonstrate at a fly tying evening. He has participated several times as a member of the South African team in the annual FIPS-Mouche World Fly Fishing Championships and was kind enough to share his CDC techniques with us. I can't remember what the fly was called, but it was predominantly dressed with CDC and involved a split-thread dubbing loop. I tried tying the pattern a couple of nights later and instead of ending up with a beautiful mayfly imitation like MC had tied, mine resembled something more like a ball of CDC fluff. With CDC being so expensive at that stage, I decided to keep the fly instead of stripping it down and reusing the hook.

My next outing happened to be to Beat 3 of the Elandspad stream near Worcester in the Western Cape. In spring and summer it is renowned for having an early to mid-morning hatch of net-winged midges (Blephariceridae). They gather in large swarms and fly a couple of centimetres

above the water. The fish go crazy during this hatch and you will often see pools and runs exploding, as rainbows launch themselves from the water to intercept these little insects. I, like many other anglers, had always found fishing at these times extremely frustrating and I would often make several fly changes with little success. On this particular day I sat down on a rock to contemplate my next fly change and noticed the CDC blob sitting in the experimental section of my fly box. I tied it on, cast it out and had instant success. While the fly worked extremely well, it just consisted of palmered CDC and was difficult to see in anything but the brightest light.

A couple of months later I was sitting at my vice, tying some parachute mayflies. I had tied on the post and was about to run the thread down the hook shank to attach the tail when it suddenly dawned on me – why not add a post to the CDC blob to make it more visible? Palmering the CDC chenille along the hook shank and on either side of the post as opposed to the conventional parachute technique of winding the hackle around the post itself, seemed a little strange at first but, after I had completed a couple, I got used to the process. The results when fishing them were even more spectacular. I now had a fly that was extremely effective, could be tied very small to better imitate the midges and was highly visible at any distance. My angling companions soon started taking notice of the fly, tying and fishing it, and singing its praises.

One of my most memorable experiences with the fly was fishing the Coldbrook stream in the North Eastern Cape with Mario Geldenhuys. Tom Sutcliffe and Ed Herbst had dropped us off higher up the stream as they were fishing the lower section together. Mario and I took turns nymphing the runs and pools, catching numerous beautifully-spotted rainbows. In the late afternoon, we got to a larger pool in a bend of the river. The fish were rising all over the pool

to a hatch of small mayflies and it was finally time to put away the nymphs and fish dries. It was Mario's turn, and I stood next to him while he changed to a beautifully tied, extended-body mayfly. Mario's fly tying is like his rod and net building, absolute perfection! His first cast drifted through the rising fish without a touch. The second and third casts had the fish nosing his fly out of the way to get to the naturals. After watching Mario change flies a number of times, I was getting eager to have a few casts myself before the hatch ended. I could see that Mario was starting to get a little frustrated so I offered him a HiVis CDC Midge. The look on his face was one of bemusement. These fish had just ignored several of his beautifully crafted flies, why on earth would they consider a blob of CDC on a hook? He took the fly from me and tied it on; I suspect because he is too polite and didn't want to insult me by rejecting it. First cast and a nice rainbow launched itself out of the water and took the



South African Fishing Flies by Peter Brigg and Ed Herbst – see [here](#) and [here](#) and [here](#) and [here](#) – is available from Exclusive Books and other book stores.

fly on re-entry. The look on Mario's face was priceless. After releasing the fish we took turns catching several more. The HiVis CDC Midge had gained another reluctant convert.

I think one of the reasons for the popularity of this fly besides its effectiveness, is that it's so quick and simple to tie. A dry fly hook, a parachute post of fluorescent red or pink Antron and a split-thread dubbing loop with black CDC palmered up the shank and on either side of the post to the hook eye. I prefer to tie in the post towards the middle of the hook shank and trim it very short. This makes it invisible to the fish below, balances the fly properly and still leaves it highly visible to the angler. The fly works well during mayfly and midge hatches and also as a general searching pattern in clear, low-water conditions. It has accounted for a number of my larger trout, as well as several other species, including surface-feeding mullet along the Western Cape coast.

Over the last couple of years I have simplified my fly tying; some could rightly say it has never moved

out of the simple stage. Most of my patterns contain CDC and perhaps one or two other materials. They are buggy and generally quick to tie, to the point that I don't feel concerned about donating the odd one to a tree. The fish seem to like them and ultimately they are the only critics that count.

Dressing

Hook: Size 16-20 light-wire hook

Thread: Gordon Griffiths 14/0 Sheer black

Post: Antron or Egg Yarn – colour of choice

Body: Natural or dyed-black CDC