



## FLIES THAT CHANGED OUR THINKING

*Ed Herbst*

*“Fly fishing begins with the fly, a fact often obscured in the seductive technomadness of modern tackle, where each new rod or line or gadget is unveiled to messianic trumpets, the redeemer of your miserable angling equipage. But the fly is always prior. In the whole lumbering clanking warehouse of an onstream angler, the fly is the starting point, the single piece of gear we carry from which the entire sport can be reconstructed.”*

**- Ted Leeson, *The Habit of Rivers***

We are indebted to Bill Hansford-Steele and to Struik for providing us with an historic overview of the evolution and development of local fly patterns in Hansford-Steele's 2009 coffee-table book *Fishing Flies for Africa*. It covers 800 flies in all and in two chapters. 'South African nymphs and dry flies' and 'South African wet and lure flies', he lists 184 patterns which could be considered indigenous – and that is just for freshwater fish.

But which, among all these flies, are the milestone indigenous patterns and domestic flies that changed our mindset in terms of originality of design, use of materials or were the first to imitate specific genera in the broad spectrum of organisms upon which local fish prey?

The following is a brief and subjective chronology:

### **Moot Moth (1900)**

The first imitative dry fly to be tied and fished in South Africa was probably the Mooi Moth, which seems to have been used to imitate massive mayfly

hatches, possibly *Neurocaenis* according to the late Bob Crass, on the Moot River in Natal in the early 1900s. Jack Blackman cited its dressing as:

**Hook:** Size 14-16

**Tail:** Blue dun hackle fibres

**Body:** Stripped peacock quill

**Wing:** Slips from a grey wing feather

**Hackle:** Blue dun

### **Mountain Swallow**

**(towards a strict presentation thinking – 1935)**

Although no longer relevant, I include the Mountain Swallow because I would argue that it was the first local fly design that was created with specific intent. We are indebted to Paul Curtis, *Fishing Wider Margins – A History and Bibliography of Angling in Africa* (Platanna Press, 2015) and to Malcolm Meintjies, *Favoured Flies and Select Techniques of the Experts. Volume 4 (FOSAF, 2008)* for their chapters on Fred Bowker (Kingfisher). Bowker arrived in Cape Town from England in 1902 and a year later was fishing the Eerste River in Stellenbosch.

He wrote two books, *A Trout Fisher in South Africa* (1922) and *Trout Flies* (1938) and it was in the latter that he described a fly of his own design, the Mountain Swallow. Bowker fished down and across, initially with salmon flies such as the Durham Ranger and Silver Wilkinson in the largest permitted size, about a current size 10.

He caught some 10 000 trout in his angling years and found that what was in their stomachs could not be correlated with the fly he caught them on. He thus contended that strict imitation did not matter and to prove it designed the most outlandish fly he could think of, the Mountain Swallow. It was a winged wet fly in which orange and blue predominated and the feathers were originally derived from the Carmine Bee-Eater, which was known at the time as the Mountain Swallow. Commercial patterns used dyed rooster feathers. During the 1935 season he fished this fly exclusively and his catch rate did not decline which, he contended, proved his point.

### Walker's Killer (first imitative dam pattern – 1950s)

It was in the early fifties that South Africa's most famous fly, the Walker's Killer, was designed and tied. The 'Killer' design – in which a series of feathers are tied vertically in a sequence on either side of the hook shank – had its origins in New Zealand. The most famous fly tied in this manner is the Mrs Simpson, but New Zealand author, Keith Draper, in his book *Trout Flies in New Zealand* (A. H. & A. W. Reed, Wellington, 1971) says the first person to tie flies in this style was Frank Lord of Rotorua, who developed the Lord's Killer about 1940.

Not surprisingly then, the Walker's Killer was the product of a New Zealander, Lionel Walker, who fished the Tongariro River and Lake Taupo. In the 1940s he met and married a South African woman who had gone to New Zealand as a teacher. He and his wife, Isabelle, returned to South Africa where he remained until he died in 1964.



*The Walker's Killer, first tied in the 1950s and still popular amongst fly-fishers today.*

What makes the fly unique is that it is made of 18 English partridge feathers tied in three vertical tiers of three feathers on each side of the hook shank – nine feathers on each side. This gives it a most desirable characteristic – it feels soft, resilient, plump and succulent.

Since it was first introduced, the Walker's Killer has deceived tens of thousands of trout and its success is largely attributable to its resemblance to two of the staple constituents in the diet of South African trout – dragonfly nymphs and the freshwater crab. The crab, *Potamonautes*, is not found in the Northern Hemisphere and also does not occur in trout streams in South America, Australia or New Zealand. It is, however, an important seasonal constituent in the diet of trout and other freshwater fish in South Africa.

For anglers who target big trout – by which I mean approaching double figures in pounds – the Walker's Killer remains the fly of choice. Martin Davies of Rhodes University, whose stocking of dams in the Eastern Cape has contributed tens of millions of rands to local tourism, adds a bead

with a painted-on eye and a few strands of Flashabout to the mix. Alan Hobson, who runs a fly-fishing shop at his Angler and Antelope B&B in Somerset East, adds a zonker strip to a pattern similar to the Mrs Simpson and it is the default fly for the outstanding barbel fishing which the area provides. In an article on Tom Sutcliffe's *The Spirit of Fly Fishing* website, I profiled Christo du Plessis who targets big trout in Barkly East and his automatic choice is a Walker's Killer or its close relative, the Mrs Simpson.

### Caribou Spider (first clipped deer hair stream pattern and Wolf Spider imitation – 1960s)

In the mid- 1960s, while Lionel Walker's fly was being fished with heavy sinking lines on rivers and dams elsewhere in South Africa, a professional musician from the English county of Yorkshire was developing tactics on the fast, shallow and clear mountain streams near Cape Town, which would change the face of fly-fishing in South Africa forever.

His name was Mark Mackereth, and he was a bass player with the Cape Town Symphony Orchestra.



*The original Caribou Spider, designed and tied by the late Mark Mackereth in the 1960s.*

He fished a Pezon & Michel split cane rod with silk lines and was largely instrumental in introducing the up-stream, dead-drift, dry-fly technique. Prior to his arrival, the universal technique on rivers was to fish a sinking line across and down or downstream with a slow retrieve. He will best be remembered for the pattern he developed, the Caribou Spider (described in detail in the chapter on Wolf Spider imitations, page 79), but his greatest contribution was the encouragement he gave to young anglers such as Tony Biggs and Tom Sutcliffe, who went on to advance the art of fly-fishing and fly-tying in South Africa significantly.

### The RAB (most famous dry fly on South African streams – April 1965)

It was in April 1965 that another classic South African pattern, the RAB, was named. The RAB is a large-hackled fly, what the British call a Variant and the Americans a Spider. The Variant, so called because it had a hackle twice the normal size, was invented by Dr William Baigent in North Yorkshire, England in the



*The RAB, arguably South Africa's most iconic fly, tied by its creator, Tony Biggs.*



early 1900s. In America, in the 1960s, Art Flick made the Grey Fox Variant famous.

The late Al McClane, in *The Practical Flyfisherman* (Stoeger Publishing Company, 1978), described the Variant as 'the one fly that a beginner or expert can use with complete confidence on most fishing days. If you were to fish every day during that period of the year when trout rise to floating flies – using a Spider or Variant – you would catch your daily share of trout and probably hook some of the largest ones that will ever come to any dry fly. I won't even make exceptions about where you do this fishing. Provided it is water with a normal fly-eating trout population, you are going to get a chance at every fish that wants to be caught and even a few

who usually know better. Of all the trout flies, the one you can least afford to be without, is the Spider. The Spider is thought to imitate long-legged insects like the crane fly, spider or water strider. The fact that many, apparently selective trout, will fall for a Spider when nearly perfect imitations fail is important to remember.'

The RAB was the product of one of Mark Mackereth's protégés, Tony Biggs, as described on pages 41-43 of this book. It is interesting from a structural point of view in that it has a herl body, but unlike the normal procedure when herl is used (i.e. tied in by the tips and wound forward to give a gently tapered body), it is tied in by the butts and the tips are deliberately splayed all over the place to give the idea

of a large insect such as a dragonfly, damselfly or cicada sprawled helplessly in the water.

The herl used initially was from the glossy flight feather of an Egyptian Goose which was chosen because it was shiny, tough and waterproof. In later years pheasant tail was also used.

For the rest the construction is basically that of a variant.

The white hackle-fibre tail is tied longer than usual to balance the bigger hackles. The herl 'legs' are tied in by the butts, twirled round the red thread and taken forward in two wide turns to leave a little red colour showing through. The herl legs are then spread apart with the thread.

The use of red thread, Tony told me, was inspired after reading Negley Farson's famous classic, *Gone Fishing*, which stressed the value of including red materials in the fly.

A large-hackled fly tied on a small hook parachutes gently to the water surface and, if you see where a fly lands, it is easy to follow thereafter. What the RAB design provides more than any other dry fly is movement. It responds nervously to every tug and push of the current, every stray breeze sets its hackle fibres and 'legs' quivering. Its other advantage, I believe, is that with its large hackle and long feather-fibre 'legs' it comes into the trout's window a lot earlier than a fly of smaller dimensions would.

With an upstream wind the RAB is a delight to fish, responding beautifully to roll-casts. If the wind is blowing down-stream however it is best to try something else. Big-hackled flies can twist light tippets and the answer to this is to use the Surgeon's Swivel knot which is illustrated in an article by Laurence Davies on the Durban Fly Tyers website. When tying this knot I shade it with my body, apply Loon Knot Sense and then gently tighten before exposing the knot to the sun. This procedure significantly strengthens all knots.

## High Water RAB

(first use of squirrel tail fibres in a dry fly – 1970)

For further information read Tom Sutcliffe's article, *Tying a High Water RAB*, on his *Spirit of Flyfishing* website and the chapter, *South Africa's Squirrel Hair Dry Flies*, in this book.

## Red-Butt Woolly Worm

(the fly that ended the reign of the Walker's Killer)

In the early 1970s the Walker's Killer was toppled from its 20-year pre-eminence as the favourite wet fly by another, the John Beams Red-Butt Woolly Worm.

John was contemporary of Tom Sutcliffe, Tony Biggs and Mark McKereth whose pioneering work on Cape streams in the 1960s shaped South African fly tying thereafter.

Tom and Tony moved to Natal in the early 70s and, encouraged by their tales of big stillwater trout in the foothills of the Drakensberg Mountain range, he joined Tom in Pietermaritzburg.

He ran his own company and, in today's parlance, would be described as a creative director in an advertising agency.

Here's how Dean Riphagen described it in *The South African Fly-Fishing Handbook* (New Holland, 1998): "This fly's evolution in South Africa is interesting, particularly as it was first fished as a dry fly. John Beams had been fishing the Smalblaar River, which at the time was running high but clear. He was using a dry fly – a Wickham's fancy – which, because of the heavy water, was unable to stay afloat for long. Despite this it worked well as a wet fly and accounted that day for several rainbows. John subsequently experimented with the colour of the pattern and, when he moved to the former Natal, he tried it in stillwater. Changes to the dressing followed: he tied it with a hackle stripped from one side to ensure a sparsely dressed pattern, and later added a hot-orange butt. Instead of using the conventional chenille

popular at the time in American versions, he tied the body with dubbed seals's fur. Eventually the pattern evolved to become the Red Butt Woolly Worm. It is a classic example of the fly tying philosophy of South Africans such as the late John Beams, Gavin Grapes and Tony Biggs in that it is tied with a slim body and a sparse, palmered hackle."

Tom Sutcliffe says that the Red Butt Woolly Worm was so favoured on the slower sections of the Mooi River, home to some very big brown trout, that few anglers used anything else.

He added that John used the reverse hackling technique used by Al Troth on the Elk Hair Caddis. The hackle is tied in at the hook eye and palmered back to the hook bend where it is then trapped by the rib which is wound forward to the hook eye and tied off. Initially John used silver braid for the rib but this was later replaced by wire.

John's favourite pattern could trace its antecedents back to Izaak Walton and Charles Cotton and the one fly that he tied to imitate a specific insect, the Snipe Fly, never gained any traction and I think that is because it is not a staple trout food.

*Rhagionidae* larvae, much like the larvae of antlions, dig a conical pit to trap passing insects. The adult fly, looks like a housefly with an orange spot on its abdomen. It lives on nectar and, during breeding seasons congregates in groups of about a dozen on the shaded side of in-stream rocks.

John's Snipe Fly pattern was tied on a size 16 hook, had a loop of orange chenille at the hook bend, a body of dubbed brown fur and a small brown hackle.

He also experimented with snail imitations – black wool tied in a small ball in the centre of the hook.

John had a big impact on South African fly fishing and his Natal Notebook newsletters, carried in *Piscator* in the 1970s were eagerly read and provide a useful chronicle of fly fishing in KZN in those formative years.

## Steele's Taddy (first tadpole imitation 1974)

The Steele's Taddy was the first locally-designed fly to imitate the platanna tadpole. Alan Hobson's 2007 imitation of the Rana tadpole – the HOT Fly - seeks to achieve the same silhouette but has the advantage of a more mobile marabou tail.

Bill Hansford-Steele tells the story of its origin in *Freshwater Fishing in South Africa* by Michael Salomon (1978).

In 1974 he was fishing the Transvaal Fly Fishers Club's stillwaters on the farm Middelpunt between Belfast and Dulstroom. When he spooned a trout he had caught he found it packed with platanna tadpoles.

A week before he had read Keith Fulsher's *Tying and Fishing the Thunder Creek Series* (Freshet Press, 1973). It is full of bullet head patterns in which bucktail is tied in pointing forward over the hook eye and then pulled back to create the head of a streamer. He returned to his caravan for breakfast and quickly tied a few imitations using this technique and squirrel tail hairs dyed black. Returning to the dam he caught his limit within an hour. The fly was later tied commercially and sold under the name of Steele's Taddy

## DDD

(South Africa's most significant dry fly - November 1976 )

I would rate the DDD as the most significant dry fly in the evolution of fly fishing in South Africa because it changed the course of dam fishing in this country. Previously dam anglers would fish off the wall or wade until waist-deep before starting to cast their sinking patterns on sinking lines. Tom Sutcliffe and Hugh Huntley were catching trout in water little more than knee-deep by casting the DDD ten metres back from the water's edge with just a few feet of leader touching the surface of the dam.



*The popular DDD is another iconic dry fly, this one tied by its creator, Tom Sutcliffe.*

The DDD is not unusual in its design but rather in its body material. It is made with the spun-and-clipped fur of the klipspringer (*Oreotragus oreotragus*) which is South Africa's only antelope with hollow hair. Tom first tied it in November 1976 as a beetle imitation on the Umgeni River, but it really achieved fame as a stillwater floater. He gave an example to his friend Bill Duckworth who regularly fished dams in the Dargle area of the Natal province and he started catching some huge fish on it. It was accordingly named the Duckworth Dargle Delight or DDD. It was originally tied on size 8 - 14 hooks with a brown hackle and tail. In this form it was a wingless local version of American deer hair flies which evolved in the 1930s, such as the Irresistible tied by Joe Messinger of West Virginia and the Rat-faced McDougall popularised by Harry and Elsie Darbee in the Catskill Mountains of New York state. It became a truly indigenous South African pattern when Hugh Huntley replaced the rooster hackle and tail with klipspringer hair. "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 beetle, grasshopper or moth", Tom says.

A step-by-step photographic sequence on the tying procedure can be accessed by typing DDD into the search bar on Tom's *Spirit of Flyfishing* website.

## White Death

(first caddis imitation – 1981)

Robin Fick's imitation of the egg-laying caddis is described in this book and a step-by-step fly tying sequence can be found in Chapter 9.

## TVN nymph

(Yellowfish on fly – 1985)

If the Walker's Killer is South Africa's most iconic fly then Theo van Niekerk's TVN nymph, which was tied to imitate a fresh water mussel, *Corbicula fluminalis*, found in the Vaal River, was the fly of the century. It was to have a profound impact throughout the country and its influence endures to this day – not because of its intrinsic qualities as a fly or because it possessed any specific powers of attraction, but because it changed a mindset.



*A couple of well-used TVNs, tied by the late Theo van Niekerk*

Prior to Van Niekerk's pioneering efforts in catching yellowfish on the fly it was accepted that this was not possible and that yellowfish could only be caught on baited hooks. For sound reason the February 1985 issue of *Tight Lines/Stywe Lyne* magazine described Van Niekerk's pioneering experiments as the most important discovery of the previous half century.

By the time Van Niekerk died on 6 November 2003, fly fishing for yellowfish was practised throughout the country and anglers sought to catch all six species found in South Africa on fly.

## Hover Dragon

(1985)

Roger Baert's dragonfly nymph imitation was the first design to mimic the spurt and slow-drop movement of this insect and this behaviour is also emulated in a subsequent pattern, the Papa Roach. Roger says that the basis for the fly was laid in 1983 but it reached its final form in 1985 with the addition of the red Edge Bright eyes.



Roger Baert's Stillwater fly, the Hove Dragon

## The Red-eyed Damsel Nymph (1986)

"The Lakes at Inhluzane", chapter four in Tom Sutcliffe's stellar book *Hunting Trout* was included by Nick Lyons' in *The Best Fishing Stories Ever Told* (Skyhorse Publishing 2010). This small area of the Dargle in the foothills of the Natal Drakensberg contained more than two dozen extremely fertile dams which formed the crucible in which many, if not most, of our contemporary dam fishing flies and tactics were formed.

In 1986, by serendipitous good fortune, Hugh Huntley's Red Eye Damsel was created and, three decades later it remains a default pattern in the fly boxes of anglers who fish dams for trout

For many years anglers in Natal had used tiny loops of black Tuff chenille to represent the eyes of one of the staple foods of trout in Natal dams - the damselfly nymph. While tying flies one evening for the next day's fishing trip, Hugh ran out of black chenille and used red instead. The next day Tom Sutcliffe had a blank day and Hugh caught



Hugh Huntley's Red-eyed Damsel is a popular, predominantly stillwater fly.

twelve good trout - good in Natal terms being from three to seven pounds. This led to the development of what became known as "Hugh Huntley's Red-eyed Damsel" which is now tied and sold commercially in South Africa. Although the first fly had a dubbed fur body, the fur was later replaced with olive marabou. It is normally tied on a 2-x long shank hook in sizes 8 to 14.

## The Dog's Breakfast

(first indigenous streamer pattern for marine fish. Created by Maxi Holder at Kosi Bay – 1987)

Two other flies Maxi created, the Inhaca Parrot and the Toothless Budgie, have also earned enduring reputations as outstanding salt water flies. The fly is more fully described in Chapter 15.

## The G & B Low Floater

(stacked deer hair dry fly – 1987)

When Gary Borger visited South Africa in 1989 as part of a contingent of top international fly fishers invited by FOSAF, I guided him on the Holsloot stream near Rawsonville. I showed him a local deer hair pattern, the G and B Low-Floater. "Ah, that's my Devil Bug", he said. "No it isn't – we stacked the head!" I said in reply.

Dean Riphagen recounts the history of this fly in his stellar book, *The South African Fly-Fishing Handbook* (Struik, 1998). Two of Dean's friends, Gavin Grapes and Jimmy Baroutsos had tied their version of a US pattern, the Cooper Bug which Gary Borger later modified. To make the fly more buoyant and more visible Dean used the stacking process, developed by tyers of deer hair bass bugs, to create a vertical wing shaped like an inverted parachute. By flaring the single bunch of deer hair at the head and then adding further bunches of flared deer hair, a very effective dry fly was created.



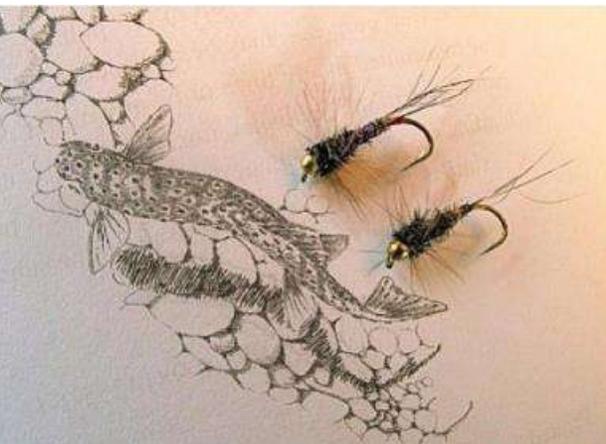
Dean Riphagen's G&B Low Floater, reputed to be most appealing to brown trout.

Unlike traditionally hackled dry flies the G & B uses no hackle and does not ride above the water's surface. Instead the pattern floats low in the surface film, presenting the trout with an unbroken, life-like body silhouette. The umbrella-shaped head provides a wide surface area and traps lots of air in the pockets between the hair to float the fly through the roughest water. Like most successful patterns it consists of very few materials. It is usually tied on size 14 and 16 light wire hooks and consists of thread, deer hair and a dubbed synthetic fur body, usually orange or chartreuse, which seems particularly appealing to local brown trout. It proved to be the most effective dry fly for the brown trout on the Witte in the 1980s and 90s but was gradually superseded by foam rubber patterns.

## ZAK

(indigenous nymph pattern – 1988)

Google 'Zak Nymph' and 'Images Zak Nymph' and you will find ample information on South Africa's most



*The Zak nymph created by Tom Sutcliffe is characteristic of many nymph species found in South African waters.*



*The Millionaire's Taddy, tied by its originator, the late Harry Stewart.*

famous generic nymph pattern and a step-by-step sequence of photographs illustrating how to tie it can be found on Tom Sutcliffe's website.

## Millionaire's Taddy

(first commercial use of palmered fur strips on streamers – 1990)

Harry Stewart, a commercial fly tyer who moved from Zimbabwe to East London in the late nineteen eighties, made the Millionaire's Taddy a legendary fly in the Eastern Cape and a chapter in this book is dedicated to his memory.

With thin fur strips - mink, muskrat, squirrel and rabbit - now being marketed by companies like Wapsi, the technique of using palmered zonker strips to create large nymphs and streamers becomes a lot easier. I combined this technique with Veniard glass bead eyes to create the Lakenvlei Dragon which is proving very effective on the Lakenvlei Dam near Ceres.

## Harry's Termite

(first effective pattern to mimic the nuptial flight of termites which, on dams, cause, frenzied feeding – 1990)

Google 'Images - Termite fly pattern' and you will see imitations of this big and nutritious insect from the USA, Australia and Malaysia. Harry Stewart's clipped deer hair pattern with its innovative wing technique was tried and tested on Gubu Dam in the Eastern Cape and proved virtually infallible. Something of his life and patterns is included in Chapter 21 of this book.

## The Marine Blood Worm

(Imitating a staple food source for marine fish – 1991)

The Marine Blood Worm is not so much a milestone pattern as it is unusual if not a unique salt water fly. Created originally by Ken d' Hortman, perfected by the late Peter Smith and later refined by Jay Smit the developer of the J Vice. It is intended to imitate a marine blood worm *Arenicola loveni*. that is found along the South African coastline



*The Marine Blood Worm first created by Ken d'Hortman – a successful inter-tidal zone fly, the tying of which was later simplified by the late Pete Smith and Jay Smith.*

from Kosi Bay on the Zululand Coast to Alexander Bay on the West Coast. It consists of a short shank size 12 hook and only one material, red, burgundy or olive Flex Floss, a translucent, stretchy material. While Peter Smith advocated using thread to tie the fly, Jay Smit developed a method of using Flexi Floss as both the body material and the means of attaching it to the hook. The Marine Blood Worm has accounted for many inshore fish the likes of Blacktail, Mullet, various wrasse species and even small Kingfish. As it is an almost impossible task to describe the tying sequence adequately, it's recommended that anyone interested in the pattern should communicate with the Durban Fly Tyers.

## The Sunken Beetle

(first sunken terrestrial – November 1993)

To my knowledge my Sunken Beetle, based on Mike Weaver's similar pattern fished on British small streams such as the Dart, the Lyn and the Teign and described in his book *The Pursuit of Wild Trout* (Merlin Unwin, 1991) was the first weighted terrestrial pattern to be fished locally and this was followed by my Copper Wire Ant. Both are fished like a nymph using a strike indicator. With the advent of 1.5 mm brass and tungsten beads tying these two patterns in #18 becomes easy and their depth in the water can be controlled by bead choice. Use a glass bead for low water conditions. These flies are more fully described on pages 95-102.



Fred Steynberg's Wolf Spider pattern is a good example of the use of the halo hackle style.

## The Halo Hackle as a parachute (June 2000)

In the June 2000 issue of *Flyfishing* magazine, Tom Sutcliffe wrote about the concept of a dual parachute hackle with a small hackle either above the bigger hackle, to aid the diffraction of light, or below it to provide support. I wrote an extensive article on this development which can be accessed by typing 'Zakhamer' into the search bar on Tom's site. Tom later combined a small rooster hackle and a partridge hackle and this formed the basis of Fred Steynberg's foam rubber imitation of the wolf spider.

## Carp Fritz (the only carp fly you need – 2001)

Sean Mills pioneered fly fishing for carp in this country and, when he says the Carp Fritz is the only fly you need for catching this species, he speaks with the authority of landing dozens of double-figure carp



The Carp Fritz, tied by Sean Mills, who pioneered carp fishing on fly.

## Papa Roach (first South African fly to be included in the Orvis catalogue – 2003)

In a way the Papa Roach was an evolution of Roger Baert's Hover Dragon, which was the first to emulate the spurt and slow-sink movement of the dragonfly nymph. It has become the definitive dragonfly nymph imitation in this country and has accounted for more big trout in recent years than any other fly. This fly is more fully described in pages 47-51.

## JAM Fly (First successful pattern for grunter – 2003)

In January 2016 I attended a bi-monthly Vice Squad (fly tying) meeting at the Cape Piscatorial Society and was fascinated by Peter Coetzer's



The JAM fly, tied by its creator, MC Coetzer.

Frankenprawn, an articulated fly made of clipped deer hair which conceals the hooks in the feelers of a mud prawn imitation.

This was just the latest step in a two-decade attempt to crack the code needed for tailing grunter in Western Cape estuaries.

The JAM Fly was the breakthrough as MC Coetzer outlines in his chapter in this book. "The primary and innovative ingredient incorporated in the new design is a translucent sheet made of Polar Fibre and silicone", says MC.

Alan Hobson, faced with the same problem in Eastern Cape Estuaries, simplified the basic JAM Fly by using a Zonker strip and silicon claws made in Plaster of Paris moulds.

## The Sand Flea (Mullet on the dry fly – 2004)

Just as fly fishers once assumed that yellowfish could only be caught on baited hooks so, too, did

the perception exist that mullet could not be caught on fly. Leonard Flemming's imitation of the Sand Flea or Beach Hopper (*Talorchestia capensis*), which feeds on kelp that has landed on the beach and is a crustacean which is a staple in the diet of mullet, changed that perception. Mark Krige also produced a very effective sand flea imitation using CDC fibres for the body and legs and a silicone covered back.

## The Good Dr's Beetle (dam yellowfish on dry fly 2004)

What the DDD is to trout in dams the Good Dr's Beetle is to stillwater yellowfish. The development of this pattern is fully described in pages 157-161 of this book.

## The Epoxy Shrimp (first use of epoxy on a freshwater pattern – 2006)

Eben Dowd's VRES – Vaal River Epoxy Shrimp was the first fly to imitate *Ceridian nilotica* and the first to use epoxy in the tying of a South African freshwater pattern. The subsequent marketing of UV light-cured resins which were first used by dentists, makes this pattern easier to tie. This fly is more fully described in pages 65-67.

## Darryl's High-Vis Midge (first CDC pattern to gain general acceptance in South Africa – 2006)

South African fly fishers were slow to adopt CDC flies, but Capetonian, Darryl Lampert, used Marc Petitjean's split thread technique and a post of bright pink Tiemco Aero Dry Wing to create an easy-to-see CDC version of the Griffith's Gnat. You can see a step-by-step photographic sequence on the *Global Fly Fisher* website.

The High-Vis Midge imitates the adult net-winged midge and the adult black fly, both of which emerge in



*Darryl Lampert's HiVis Midge, tied to imitate adult net-winged midges and black fly.*

## The Powderwad Crab

(first fly to accurately imitate the *Potamonautid* river crabs of South Africa – 2006)

“River crabs are the largest invertebrates and constitute the largest biomass in many of South Africa’s rivers.” (Hill and O’Keeffe, 1992). Giordano (Zamps) Zamparini, a stalwart for many years of the Haenertsburg Trout Association in the Magoebaskloof Mountains of Polokwane created the first realistic and effective imitation of this vital food source for local freshwater fish species. This fly is more fully described on pages 167-169.

## The HOT Fly

**Hobson’s Original Tadpole. First close-copy imitation of the platanna tadpole - October 2007)**

Alan Hobson, who with his wife Annabelle runs the Angler and Antelope hostelry in Somerset East is,



*Alan Hobson's HOT fly, an imitation of the prolific Rana tadpoles that occur in the Somerset East region of the Eastern Cape*



*A popular modern fly, the ParaRAB, tied by its originator, Philip Meyer.*



*The innovative Simulid Nymph, created and tied by Ed Herbst.*

huge numbers in early spring on the streams near Cape Town. It was followed by two other CDC patterns, Tom Sutcliffe’s Single Feather Midge and Tim Rolston’s Soft Hackle Midge.

In an April 2014 posting on Tom's website, headlined ‘*Surveys of Insects Available as Trout Food*’, Tom pointed out that the bulk of trout diet on South African small streams is less than a centimetre long. Tim Rolston, in his excellent book, *Guide Flies*, makes the point that once a typical trout stream insect has been swept along by the current it looks like the ball of fluff you find in the lint trap of your washing machine. I posted an article on the CDC Soft Hackle Midge on Tom’s website and Tim has one on his *Fishing Gene* blog under the headline ‘Net-Winged Midges’.

to my mind, the most innovative fly tyer in the country and the HOT Fly builds on the work started by Bill Hansford - Steele with the Taddy. More information on him and his work can be accessed by visiting the *Angler and Antelope* and *Fly fishing in the Karoo* websites and Tom Sutcliffe’s website which contains a profile I wrote on the couple.

## The ParaRAB

(Squirrel hair parachute – 2007)

In 2007 Philip Mayer was fishing Elandspad beat one as a prelude to the national trials that year for the Protea team to fish in the world fly fishing championships. He wanted a fly that had the same vibrancy and movement on the water as the RAB but which was easier to cast into the wind. The ParaRAB has become an essential small stream dry fly and was the first to use squirrel tail hair as a parachute hackle. Gordon van der Spuy has posted an excellent YouTube video on the tying of this fly.

## The Simulid Nymph

(first effective imitation of the black fly larva - July 2014)

I had long been fascinated by the fact that although the larvae of the blackfly festooned the rocks on the trout streams near Cape Town, nobody was tying or fishing imitations and in 1989 I commissioned Dr Ferdy de Moor of the Albany Museum in Grahamstown to write an article, “*Blackflies*”, *Lords of the Rapids*” which appeared in that year’s edition of *Piscator*, annual journal of the Cape Piscatorial Society. This article has now been posted on the Society’s website. If you Google ‘*Images, Simulium larvae*’ you will understand why, until recently, there have been no effective imitations available. They are olive/black and translucent and it was the advent of the UV-light cured resins that made an effective imitation feasible. You can read the account of how the Simulid Nymph was designed by visiting Tom Sutcliffe’s *Spirit of Flyfishing* website and typing ‘Simulid’ into the search bar. Several articles on the insect and this fly have been posted there.