

Halo Hackle Klinkhamer

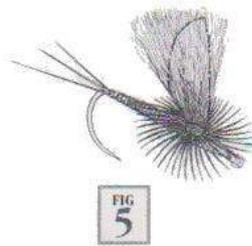
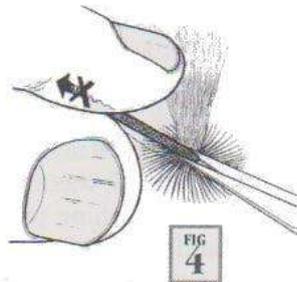
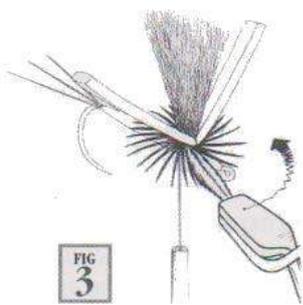
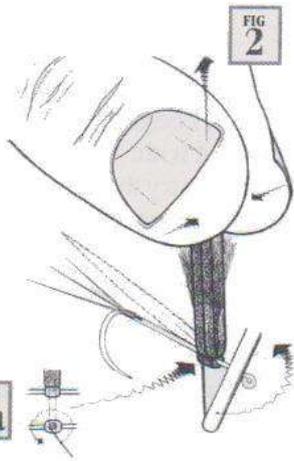
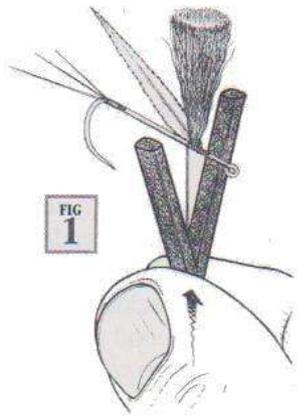
by Ed Herbst

Parachute

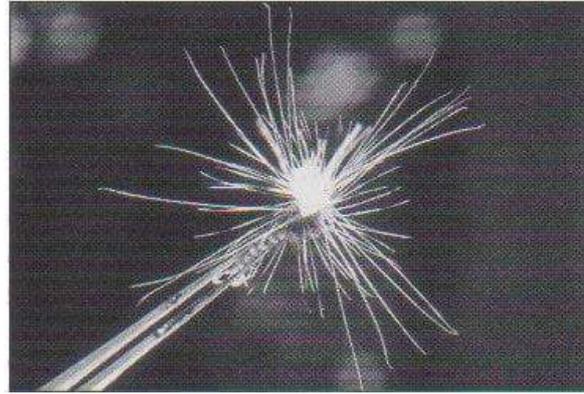
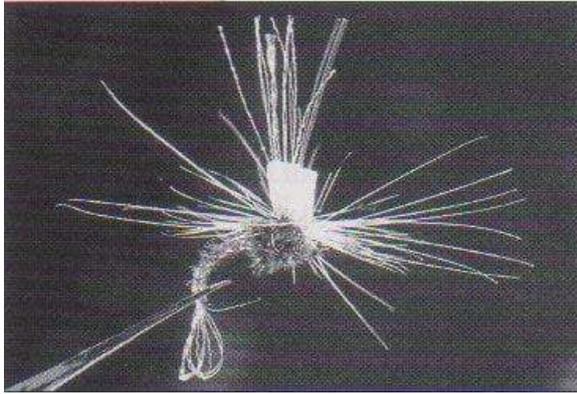
It would not be unreasonable to describe the Klinkhamer Special, tied by Hans van Klinken of Harskamp in central Holland as the greatest dry fly success story since the invention of the Adams and the Elk Hair Caddis. This parachute fly, tied on a curved hook so that its body hangs downwards in the water, has proved a success on every continent and for a wide variety of fish from salmon to our own yellowfish. He invented it during a trip to Norway for grayling in 1984 and, rather incongruously, he married two concepts – the shape of a caddis larva and the parachute method of fly tying: "It took me two days of thinking before I got a little brain wave. It was a huge and strongly curved caseless caddis larva, found in the stomach of a grayling that gave me the idea. I created a Parachute on a large partridge grub hook. My first attempts were amazing. I tried the pattern in a strong rapid of the Glomma River just in front of our tent. I wasn't really fishing but rather testing the fly in fast, broken water. It was a place where everybody was fishing and catches were very little because of the fishing pressure. A few moments later the fly was taken so aggressively that I hardly could find words to explain. The first fish caught hooked themselves. I did nothing because I simply was too astonished to set the hook. A few casts later I caught my second fish and then got a third one at exactly the same place."

The arrival of some small Tiemco hooks, in particular the TMC206 BL, a fine-wire, upturned eye, barbless caddis hook, inspired me to tie some small (16-20) Klinkhamers using as a body fine, black holographic tinsel overwrapped with a single fibre from the primary wing feather of a an Egyptian goose. For the wing I used a combination of crystal flash and nylon organza.

It proved so effective that Tom Sutcliffe tied a 'Halo-Hackle' version that was even more successful. A halo-hackle is a Variant – such as the RAB – tied with a single, sparse turn of large hackle supported by several turns of a much smaller hackle.



The original Van Klinken Special (bottom left) as illustrated by Oliver Edwards in his book, Master Fly Tying Class, and the sequence of the Morten Oland foam thorax parachute as illustrated in the May 2000 issue of the British magazine Fly Fishing and Fly Tying. Tom Sutcliffe added the halo hackle to the Van Klinken and Ed Herbst the Morten Oland thorax and a shuck.



Side and top views of the foam thorax, halo hackle Van Klinken Special as tied by the editor.

Two other ideas, gleaned from overseas magazines helped to make the tying and the fishing of the fly a lot more pleasant.

The greatest difficulty in tying parachutes is in the hackling of the fly and, specifically, in preventing the hackle from riding up the parachute post. One way is to tie the stem of the hackle feather facing upwards against the post so as to stiffen and support it and then to wind the feather in touching turns downwards towards the hook shank. Van Klinken, on his website, (<http://www.van-klinken.demon.nl/>) shows how he turns the hook to face vertically downwards during the hackling procedure so as to facilitate this step of the tying process.

The first and most simple change came from Fly Tyer magazine (www.wilyfishings.com) and was one of those 'why didn't I think of that' revelations - simply tie an overhand knot in the post material to prevent the hackle feather from riding upwards!

The second and, in my opinion, more valuable idea came from another outstanding magazine, the British publication, Fly Fishing and Fly Tying (www.flyfishing-and-flytying.co.uk). In the May 2000 issue, columnist Oliver Edwards described how Danish fly tyer, Morten Oland, cups the post and tied-in hackle feather from below with a thin piece of closed-cell foam which surrounds the hook shank and projects on either side of the post like a pair of rabbit's ears. Pulling the two foam pieces upwards so that they surround the post, Oland takes some horizontal thread wraps around the post and foam immediately above the hackle feather. He then wraps the feather in the normal way around both the foam and the post. The feather cuts into the resilient foam which also provides a buoyant thorax to the fly. After the hackle is tied off the foam is clipped short. I use bright yellow, ultra-thin Roman Moser foam and colour the thorax below the parachute with a black, felt-tip pen. You can also over-dub the foam with peacock herl which Van Klinken recommends.

The result is a fly with tremendous appeal. In the Halo Hackle version you tie the large hackle in above the small one and wind and tie it off first. It parachutes softly to the water surface and floats well because it is supported by the large hackle and the foam thorax. It is easy for the fish to see because the body is beneath the surface making it look like an aquatic insect at its most vulnerable - during eclosion. It is also easy for the angler to observe, the foam providing an easily-visible spot of colour and the post providing that all-important height above the water which makes it easy to spot in even the most turbulent water.

The Halo-Hackled, Morten Oland version of the Klinkhamer Special provides the best of all worlds. It floats where the most deadly dry flies float, pinioned in the surface film and thus looking vulnerable. With its body beneath the surface it can be seen by fish long before a normal dry fly would appear in their 'window'. Above all it is buoyant, easy-to-see and presents delicately. What more could you ask for?

Of late I have been using two new materials for the body which are available locally through Blue Water Flies (e-mail address: products@bluewatedlies.co.za) The bottom layer is Flashabou Mirage which changes colour as the light plays on it. I then tie in by the tip a single pheasant tail or Egyptian Goose feather fibre which I wind forward in widely spaced turns and the final layer is translucent Flashabou Ultra-violet.