

A six pack for Drakensberg streams

by Peter Brigg

I'm a sucker for flies of all kinds probably because I enjoy the creative side of fly tying so much; experimenting with materials and imitative patterns. Most flies that come off my vice will, on their day and with a little luck, fool a few fish but, when the going gets tough and if my survival depended on a choice of six, I wouldn't leave home without my tried and tested favourites.

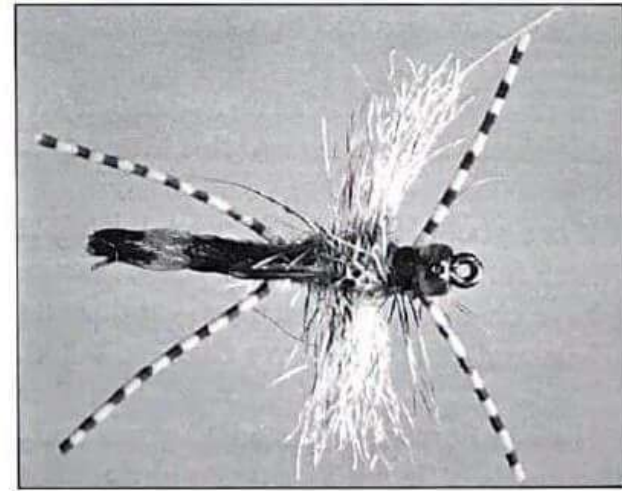
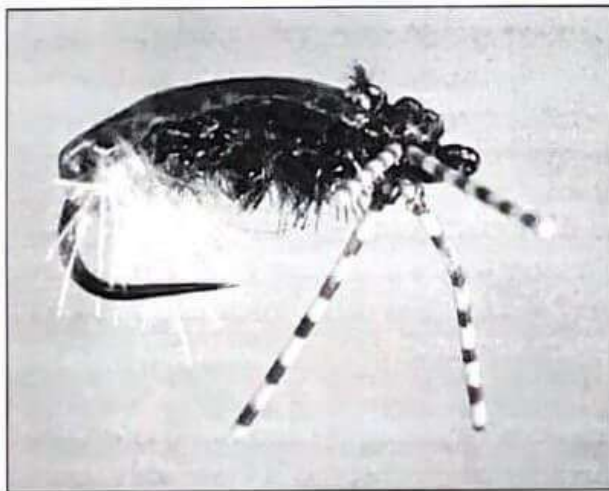
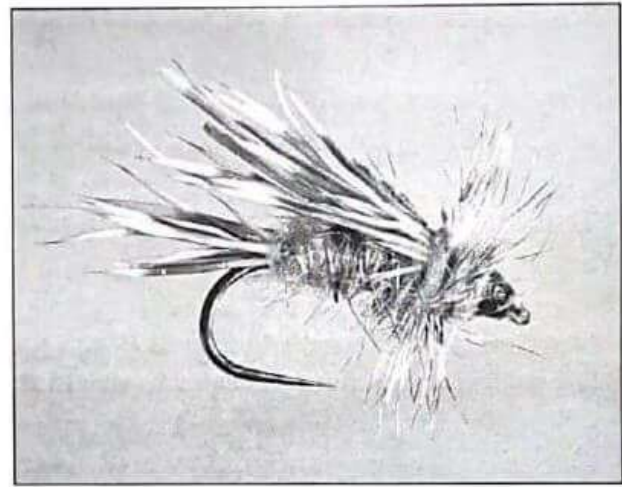
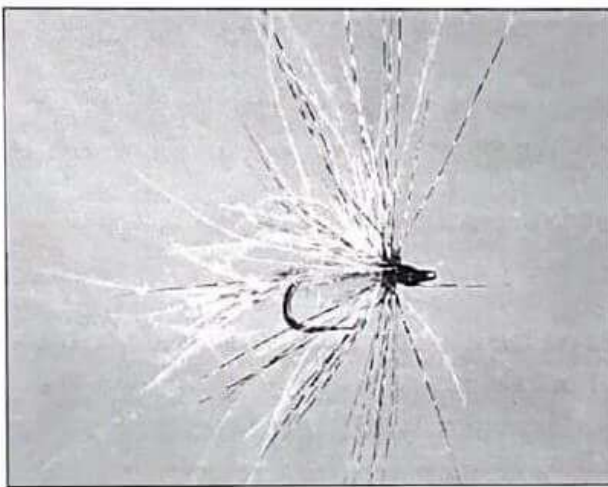
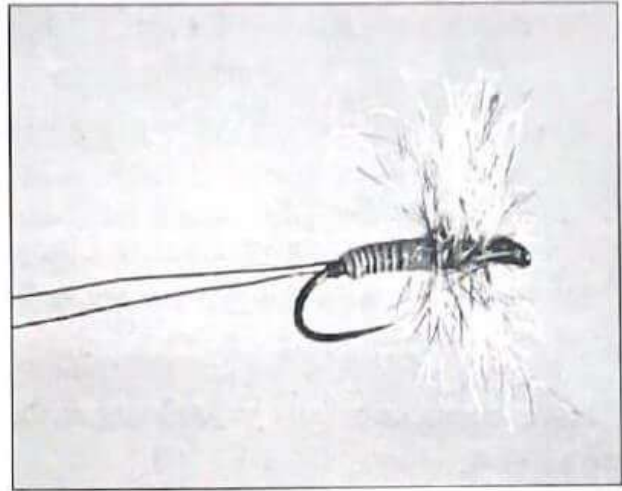
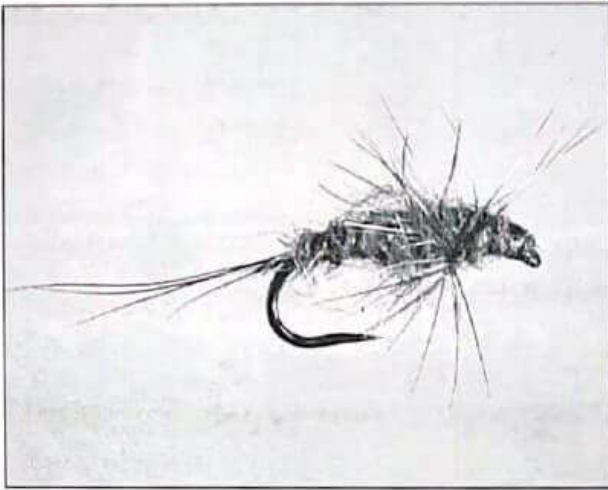
In the upland streams of the KZN Drakensberg where the wild trout are often free rising, dry flies tend to dominate my choice. But to leave out a good nymph pattern when it is a well documented fact that Mayfly nymphs are the favourite food of the hungry little trout, would be foolish. I must add that I carry the nymphs in a range of weights, and the terrestrials in floating and drowned versions. I also like my dries to float low on the surface and preferably be designed so that they present the appearance of an insect trapped in the surface film. I shy away from brass beads although I do include a few nymphs with tungsten heads to get down quickly in fast water or to reach fish holding in the odd deep hole. I also use glass beads for their natural appearance and like the trigger that their translucence creates at the thorax and head. I prefer natural materials with colours equivalent to those found on the insect and avoid shiny synthetics other than to represent natural sheen. I do add, when appropriate, flexible legs and feelers as distinguishing features. The choice of the right materials will provide movement, an aspect that is probably the most important trigger of all. In short I try to create flies with a recognisable shape, size and colour to mimic the insect I'm imitating but always ensure that it ends up with a good buggy appearance as opposed to striving for perfect imitations. In my view a slight exaggeration of distinguishing features such as legs, tails and feelers will help with deceiving the trout into believing that the fly is a recognisable food source, something he has had before and enjoyed.

I'd like to sneak a few extras in like my spider and Griffiths Gnat variations, Ed's Hopper, a Zak nymph, and a Black Parachute Adams but sticking to the brief here are my "six pack" for the small streams of the KZN Drakensberg. I have also indicated the sizes I have had most success with, and my favourite hooks for these flies.

- Nymph #12 to #18 – Tiemco – 900BL and 902BL
- Mayfly Spinner #14 to #18 – Tiemco 103BL
- Klipspringer Stimulator #14 to #18 – Tiemco 900BL or 902BL
- JAB (Just Another Bug) #14 to #18 – Tiemco 103BL
- Beetle(sunken) #14 and 16 – Tiemco 206BL or 2499SP BL
- CDC RAB #16 and #18 – Tiemco 103BL or 206BL



“Minor trout streams are outstanding schools for the cutting of first teeth and remain forever as the wells of instructive memories. Timid though they may appear, these brooks teach us humility too when we mistakenly assume that their conquest will be easy or their inhabitants naïve.” William C Black, Creek Craft, Pruett Publishing Company, 1988.



Peter Brigg's six pack, clockwise from top left: Zak nymph ribbed with UV flashabou; quill-bodied spinner with antron and krystalflash spent wings. Klipspringer Stimulator, trout's eye view of his JAB; sunken beetle with CDC representing the protruding wings (alae); short-tailed CDC RAB with sparse Coq du Leon hackle.