



THE DOG'S BREAKFAST

Maxi Holder

Lefty Kreh once wrote, “flies are at the heart of the sport”. I’m sure many of you have experienced that ‘gut feeling’ when you know that the fly you’ve just removed from your vise is about to reward you for your efforts!

Fly tying has always been an integral social function on fly fishing trips. I recall wonderful times with friends claiming a spot around the battered camping table for their vise and supply of fly tying materials. Ideas would be exchanged freely along with good-natured insults. I have always maintained that the most successful flies are those tied within sight and sound of the sea.

I have managed to keep my saltwater fly tying materials as simple as possible. My saltwater fly designs, such as the Inhaca Parrot and the Toothless Budgie, which evolved after the Dog’s Breakfast, incorporate the same materials which means that the fly tying cabinet isn’t crammed with scattered thoughts.

However, every once in a while I have to improvise when certain stocks run low. There are two things that cause our Rottweilers to evaporate from sight. The first is mention of the word ‘bath’, and the second is when I pay too much attention to the wonderful fur in the tail of the male – especially with fly tying scissors in hand!

During the early 1980s – when saltwater fly fishing was still in its infancy in this country – the month of November became synonymous with Kosi Bay on the Kwa Zulu Natal coast for a group of us.

Each year Jake Alletson, the late Keith Miller and I would be joined by Ken Leisegang, Mike Birkett and Andy Coetzee. Many other enthusiasts joined us in those early days – Jack Blackman, Dudley Dowling, Richard Schumann, Mark Yelland, Garth Batchelor and Paul White, to name a few, with wives and girlfriends joining in at times.

While fishing at Kosi Mouth back in 1987, I was not happy with the ‘streamer’ flies I had, and decided to raid Jake’s fly tying box to design a fly that would sink and not ‘surf’. I decided to weight the fly with bead chain. For the record, Jake had ‘nicked’ a short section of bead chain from Barclays Bank in Underberg. He probably ‘nicked’ the pen as well. As a result of a very rude comment made at my first attempt, the fly became known as the Dog’s Breakfast.

The Dog’s Breakfast pattern can be adapted to suit several applications, from freshwater to offshore fly fishing. The hook size will obviously vary for each application but a good quality, chemically sharpened hook with a standard shank gives the best result. For estuary and shore fishing, I prefer to use the Mustad standard shank in size 1 or 2, and up to size 3/0 for offshore. Should you not have chemically sharpened hooks, check the hook for sharpness; it should ‘stick’ in the thumbnail. The current hook of choice seems to be the Gamakatsu SL12S or the Grip 21711NSL.

Clear, ultra-fine monofilament is my tying thread of choice although Semperfli Nanosilk is winning an increasing share of the market.



The Dog's Breakfast, a popular saltwater pattern created and tied by Maxi Holder.

The position of the eyes over the hook tip is very important as it is believed that predatory fish initially lash out at the eyes of their prey. I have always preferred black to silver for the eyes, and before black bead chain became available commercially, I had to dip lengths of silver bead chain into black enamel paint. Black Koki pen has been useful in emergencies, but does not last very long in the salt. I do use lead dumbbell eyes on my larger Dog's Breakfasts for offshore use, but prefer using bead chain eyes in conjunction with lead wire for extra weight. The wire is tied in just behind the eyes and under the chenille wraps. I find that bead chain 'wraps' comfortably over the hook shank, unlike the more expensive imported dumbbell eyes I've used in the past, which tend to be rather narrow and appear to 'perch' on top of the hook shank looking 'narrow-minded', somewhat reminiscent of a mudskipper.

A good quality bucktail may cost a little more, but is well worth it in the long run. I do prefer using it to the modern synthetic fibres because of the

action in the water. A single strand of pink Gliss 'n Glow sandwiched between two layers of white bucktail contributes a 'fleshy' dimension to the bucktail when wet. Don't be in too much of a hurry to discard the bucktail after using up the white part, as the brown shades on the upper side are useful for tying darker flies. Krystal Flash or Flashabou lends a bit of 'shine' to the top of the tail and complements the shade of chenille used. Long-fibre chenille tied in behind the eyes gives the fly a 'body'.

Dog's Breakfasts tied with pearl or tea-stained chenille may emulate baitfish or small squid; pale green, small mantis shrimps; brown shades, with barred hackle added to the tail, work extremely well when swimming crabs are about; and orange has proven highly successful when nothing else would work during an overcast, drizzly day. In a nutshell, this fly is not tied to exactly replicate any particular creature; it is a 'representation' of a number of targeted food species. The pale green shade, which I prefer to the bright chartreuse, is achieved by dyeing pearl chenille with Lady Dye 'Lime'. The tea-stained shade is easily achieved by dunking pearl chenille into strong black tea and checking every now and then for the desired shade. Gently squeeze out excess moisture between layers of kitchen paper towel and then hang the lengths to dry thoroughly. It goes without saying that whenever I do find the long-fibre chenille in a pearl shade, the grocery cupboard remains bare for a while.

A single layer of the monofilament thread layered to the hook eye is added for no particular reason other than the fact that I don't like the look of a bare hook, and the few wraps of the red thread merely add a finishing touch to an otherwise drab section. I have found that Sally Hansen's Hard as Nails nail polish provides a better, more long-lasting protection than conventional varnish, which tends to discolour after a while. A protective layer is used to



coat the shank and 'nose' section, with a few drops dabbed between the eyes to ensure that they remain in place.

Make a point of chatting to other anglers when you arrive at your destination. I've found that most men don't mind being free with information in my case, but as soon as they see me with a fly rod, the playing field suddenly changes! As with fly casting, it's all in the timing – quite often fishing secrets flow freely, especially after that third 'Klippies and Coke'!

After Keith drowned in a float-tubing accident, we made one more November visit to Kosi Bay. It just wasn't the same. The dislodged Forest Weaver nest he carefully placed back into the tree was – happily – very much in use. I can still hear Keith and Jake thrashing out ideas for a fly-fishing society which they eventually agreed on naming the 'Linecasters Society'. It was customary after returning from the lakes to undertake a few chores and catch up on sleep deficit after lunch. Then Keith would sidle over to tie flies at our campsite to stock up for the evening's fishing; or was that to stock up on energy with a 'doorstop' peanut butter and syrup sandwich! The name 'Linecasters' says it all – all fly



fishers cast a fly line of some sort, but back then there was much debate as to whether a foam popper, for example, could be considered a fly in the true sense of the word.

I still have the first saltwater fly Keith tied for me. It lives in the fly tying cabinet. It has no hook - that broke off after I'd landed and released a gorgeous Kingie at the Kosi Mouth.

Dressing

Hook: Mustad Signature Salt Water S71SNP-ZS, Tiemco 800S, Gamakatsu SL12S, Grip 21711NSL in Big Game size 1 – 3/0

Thread: Nylon mono (Spook) thread sold in haberdashery shops, or Nanosilk

Weight: Lead wire

Tail: White bucktail

Body: Dyed long-fibre Crystal Chenille

Eyes: Bead chain painted black, tied on top of the hook shank and above the hook point

Head: Approximate 3mm of red thread behind the hook eye and ahead of the bead chain eyes. Covered with nail polish.