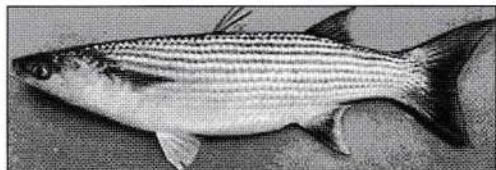


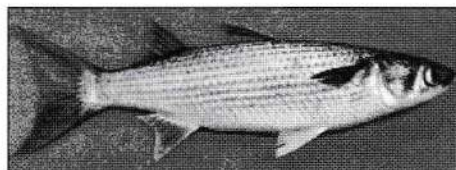
# Fly fishing for mullet in Durban Harbour

by Allen O'Connor

## TWO MAIN SPECIES



*The striped mullet normally 0.5 to 3 kg.*



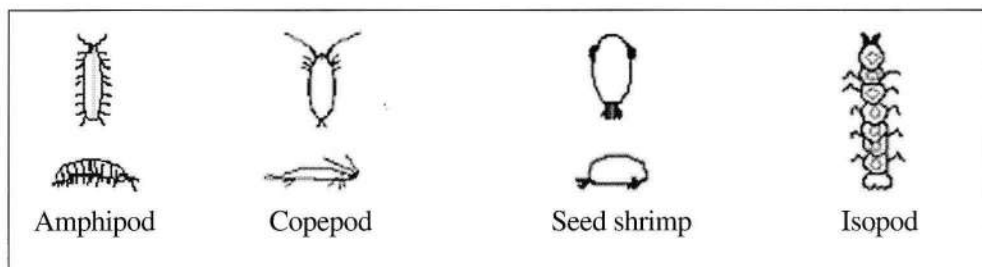
*Bullnose normally 0.5 to 3 kg.*

## SOME OF THE FOOD THE MULLET EAT

Some of the food sources for both the bull nose and the striped mullet that inhabit Durban Harbour are:

- \* Seed Shrimps,
- \* Amphipods,
- \* Copepods,
- \* Isopods.

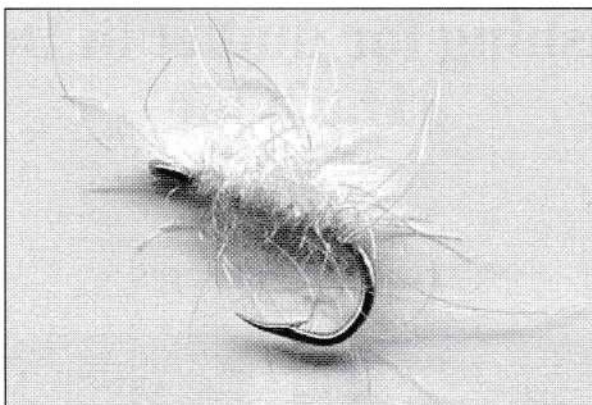
These small creatures live in the surface sand of shallow, sandy banks. They can be seen when the tide starts moving up the banks and are then found at the water line. (For more info on these creatures see the David Philip publication *Two Oceans - A Guide To The Marine Life of Southern Africa*: ISBN 0-86486-250-4)



## FLIES TO USE

For ease of fishing - and to make fishing less complicated - I stick to three main patterns - after a fair amount of research.

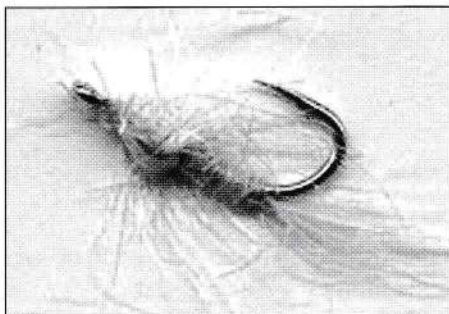
1. Copepod,
2. Isopod,
3. A generic pattern.



### 1. Copepod imitation

Hook: # 16 Tiemco 2499SP-BL.

Body: White SLF Dubbing coarse. (mixed with a splash of pearl flashabou dubbing).



### 2. Isopod imitation

Hook: #16 Tiemco 2499SP-BL.

Body: White SLF Dubbing coarse and fine, mixed with a splash of pearl flashabou dubbing.

Thorax cover: Pearl flashabou as a flashback.

Tail: White SLF hank.

Pattern tied as a flashback nymph, but with the body material teased out slightly.

### 3. Generic pattern - available at many fly shops

Hook: # 16 Tiemco 2499SP-BL.

Body: Pearl Flashabou thread with a shellback of white Antron fibres pulled over body.

Tying instructions:

a) Tie in a match-stick thickness of white antron fibres or substitute at the bend of the hook about 1.5 times the length of the hook and facing backwards as if it were a tail. Tie off.

- b) Build up the body with the pearl thread, to create a slight oblong shape. Tie off.
- c) Pull the antron over the body, not too tight, covering it completely. Tie off at the head.
- d) Trim the excess web to extend slightly beyond the hook eye.

## Fishing instructions

### 1. Equipment

- \* Polarised sunglasses.
- \* Hat.
- \* A light rod (3 -6 #) the lighter the rod, the easier the take is felt.
- \* A reel with  $\pm 150$  metres of backing.
- \* Fast sinking line. An intermediate flyline will work on the shallow banks.
- \* At least a two-metre leader, with a tippet of the clearest and lightest nylon available, (2 to 4 kg fluorocarbon as shock tippet works best).
- \* The fly should be tied on with a loop knot.

### 2. Where/how to fish

- \* The best time to fish is in summer in bright sunny conditions, with a NE wind, between 09h00 to 15h00.
- \* Fish five hours before, to three hours after high tide. Fish onto any of the sandbanks in the harbours, casting to the mullet as they move slowly across the sandbanks - not to the ones on the surface but to those that are on the bottom. The rest of the time fish into the deep channels, moving the fly slowly up the drop-off.
- \* After the fly reaches the bottom, retrieve very slowly at about 30 cm per 10 seconds - or even slower if you can.
- \* If any pull, tug, knock, or movement is felt on the flyline, strike immediately!
- \* Once the fish is on, play it gently, as a small hook can pull out very easily while the tippet, if it is light, is easily broken.

*Editor's note: For the pearl flashabou thread mentioned as the body for the generic pattern you can try either of the following materials sold in haberdashery shops as "blending filaments".*

*Kreinik Blending Filament: colour 032. Cost R24-80 for 50 metres  
DMC 4300: Colour 278. Cost R23-50 for 100 metres.*

*For thread, Uni-Thread Trico 17/0 would be ideal because the # 16 TMC 2499SP-BL is a 2x short shank hook, equivalent in shank length to a standard #18 hook.*

*SLF (Synthetic Living Fibre) was originally developed as a substitute for seal fur by Welshman, Davy Wotton, and is available in a wide variety of colours and textures. I order mine from Sportfish in London but there are other substitutes, the best in my opinion being Hareline Dubbin's "Ice Dub" in UV Pearl.*

*Allen uses Tiemco 2499 SP-BL hooks because of their sharpness. They are not corrosion resistant, so he throws the fly away after a day's use.*

*The creatures Allen is imitating are very small. According to Two Oceans, amphipods average 10mm, seed shrimps 4mm, and isopods between 10 - 15 mm. The smallest suit-*

able hook is the #20 TMC 2488H that has the same shape and weight as the 2499SP BL but has a micro barb. This is a 2x short hook which means it has the effective shank length of a normal #22. If you are tying this small, Jan Siman Hyperfine thread in white would take up less space than the 17/0 Trico thread which is thicker.

On colour, Allen says most of these creatures are tan - obviously to aid camouflage in their sandy habitat - but he says his white patterns are very close and probably stand out just enough to attract the attention of the mullet.

MC Coetzer cautions against having too much stiff fibre pointing backwards away from the bend of the hook as he says this can impede hooking. He suggests rather that the material be curved round the hook shank at the back so that it points downwards and that it be cut fairly short.

If, as MC suggests, you are using a four weight rod to cast less than ten metres to sighted, fairly powerful fish in the Cape estuaries, then I would suggest the route pioneered by Roger Baert when float tubing for big stillwater trout. Working on the premise that you are not casting very far and that short rods are more efficient fish-fighting levers than long rods, he uses the six and a half foot Orvis One Ounce two weight fly rod and has subdued many trout of close to double figures with this rig. Short rods also cast tighter loops than long rods which might be a help in the ever-present wind experienced on Cape estuaries. Orvis produces a seven foot, four weight One Ounce which would be my choice for a mullet rod, coupled with one of the new ultra light fly reels with sophisticated drag systems such as the Water Works ULA Force, the new Loop Evotec Featherweight 2Six, the Ross Evolution 1.5, the Bauer Mckenzie M5SL light fly reel or the Old Florida FW234 fly reel which seems to provide excellent value for the money. Each weighs about three and a half ounces and has a capacity of 80-100 metres of Orvis or Cortland 12-pound, dacron backing. Because one is fishing shallower water in the Cape than in Durban Harbour, MC uses a floating line. Paul Gregg imports the Evotec reel as well as the Monic transparent, weight forward, four weight floating fly line which is ideal for wary, easily-frightened fish.

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