

ED'S HOPPER – STEP-BY-STEP FLY TYING



As with most things in fly tying, you can make hoppers as complicated and layered as you like... Or, you can keep things really simple and effective. Ed's Hopper, by the venerable Cape small stream guru Ed Herbst, is one such pattern.

Think of Chernobyl ants and hoppers – this is not that kind of fly. All it really is, is a hook, some thread, foam cut or purchased in a cylindrical shape and some well-placed rubber legs that are marked with a pen. That's it. But fished with a plop on those long slow Cape summer days when the fish have gone off the boil and this pattern will provoke fish into eating and break you out of the doldrums. Give it a twitch and mobilise those legs on long, slow runs and you will enjoy aggressive takes more often than you might imagine given the aura of Cape streams fly fishing being all about delicate flies and presentations.



The Holsloot

Ed's Hopper has worked particularly well for me on the Holsloot River along the edges of palmiet-lined runs. A slight twitch brings bigger fish out from hiding under the palmiet in prime lies, or up from the depths in deeper pools.



A good Holsloot rainbow from way back.

The fly has proven itself on other trout streams and other species as well. When I received the recommended fly list from Rob Jeffrey at [Diamond River Outfitters](#) ahead of a trip to the Lower Vaal River for smallmouth yellowfish, when I saw hoppers listed, I knew what I had to tie and fast.



Apart from its tying ease and speed, the triggers are what I like about Ed's hopper. Having thrown many a live hopper at fish that I couldn't fish for, I've observed the way they rest on the water with legs splayed out. This is consciously mimicked so well by Ed's Hopper. The double knotted rubber legs for the femur and single rubber for the tibia, is a perfect match for grasshopper legs and also allows for a lot of movement and a kick if you give it a twitch. Similarly, the orange and black of the golden pheasant tippets are the perfect colour match for the underwing, which you often see in flying hoppers as you walk along a grassy path. The organza fibres (a material that Ed first brought my attention to) give it a subtle amount of flash and the simple black marker eye completes these triggers.



The fly worked well on the Vaal on the smallmouth yellows, and I had a few good fish on before too many long line releases. But a first for me was targeting the many large grass carp on [this section of the river](#). We targeted them on foot and I watched in disbelief as a grassy the size of my leg slowly swam over and sipped Ed's Hopper in like a brown trout on a chalk stream. All hell broke loose as shared in Jazz Kuschke's article on the trip in [Issue 48 edition of The Mission](#). We also targeted them off a boat where you'd see the grassies cruising on the grass edges under overhanging branches just waiting for something to fall in. The fights in deeper water were longer and harder, pulling Jazz all over the boat.

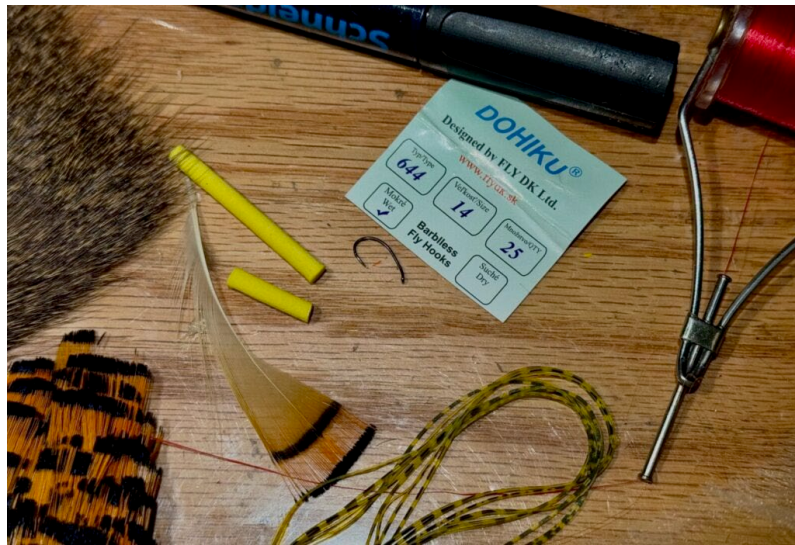


Here's a link to more detail on [Ed's Hopper from the late Tom Sutcliffe's website The Spirit of Fly Fishing](#).

STEP BY STEP

Here's my version of Ed's Hopper with minor adjustments that work for me.

Materials



Hook: Size 12 to 16 short-shank nymph hook. A nymph hook is used to help keel the fly to float upright, and the short shank allows for a wide gape, which is very important for hook-up rates with the solid foam body.

Thread: Red 70 denier

Body: Cylindrical foam, foam para posts work well or you can make your own.

Underwing: Golden pheasant tippets.

Flash: Organza or crystal flash. (I like using orange or reddish colours.)

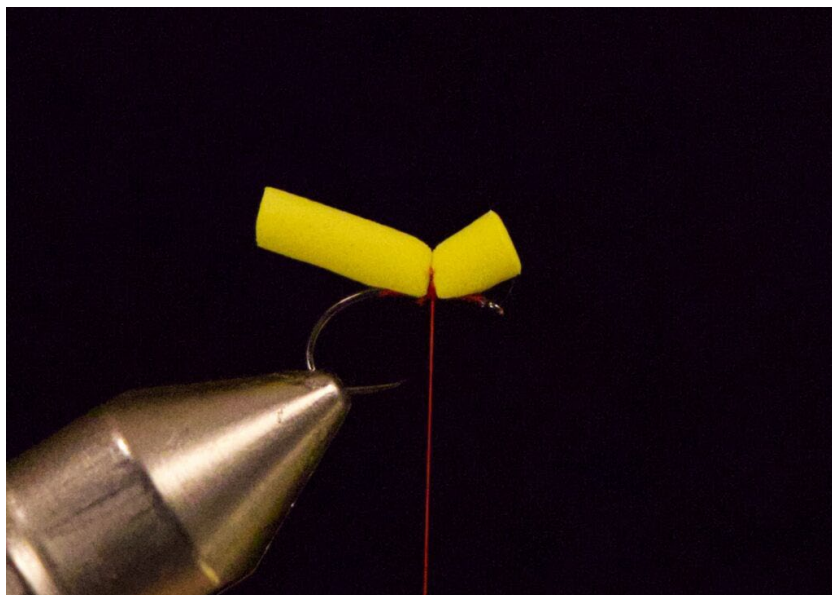
Over wing: Elk hair or similar.

Legs: Barred silly legs in yellow or olive.

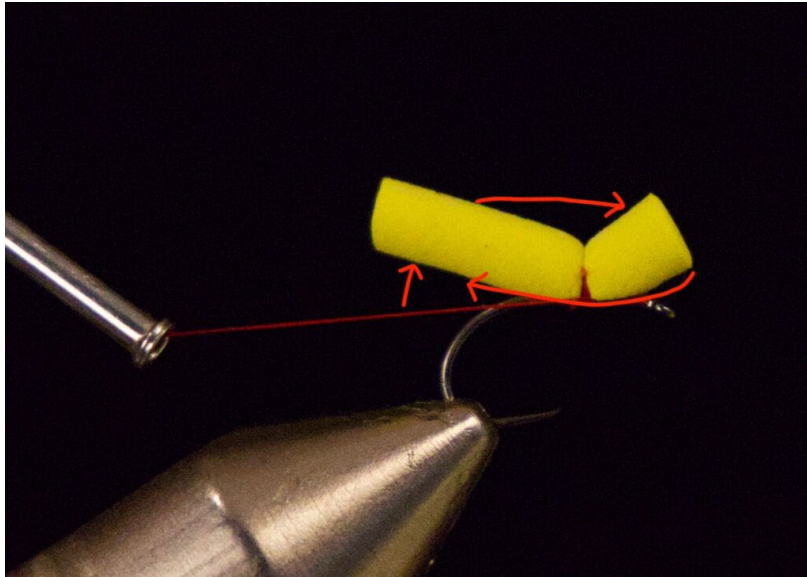
1. Build a small thread base with the thread of your choice. Avoid threads that slip easily on hook shanks because this pattern has a tendency to do so.



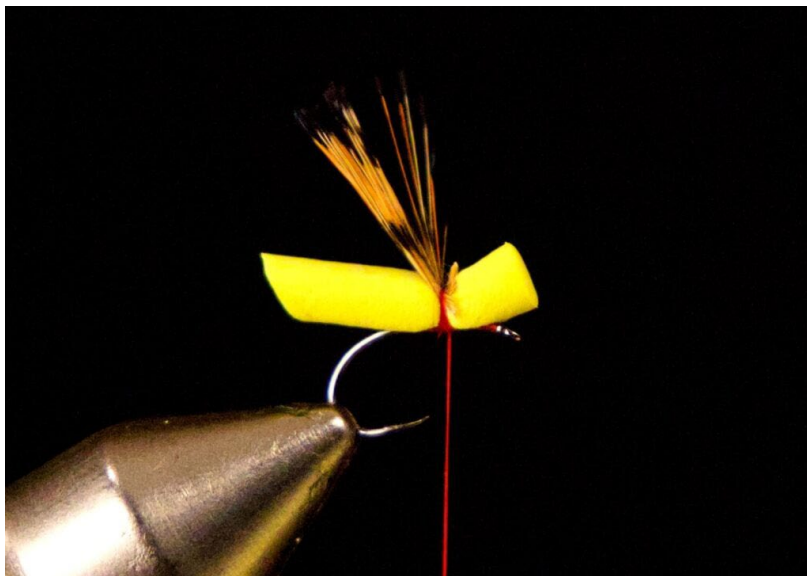
2. Tie in the foam about 3/4 along the shank as shown below, forming a head near the eye and the abdomen at the back. I like to cut the foam at the tail end at a slight angle to give it a more tapered look.



2a. To help secure the foam body and help reduce it from rotating, I make a few tight turns between the foam and the hook as shown below. This also give more purchase when finishing with super glue at the end.



3. Tie in the Golden pheasant tippets at the same position as the tie-in point of the foam. The length should be slightly longer than the abdomen but pheasant fibres stand up in the crease.



4. Strip off a couple of strands of organza.



4a. Tie in the organza over the pheasant tippets. Trim slightly longer than the tippets.



5. To create the legs, fold the rubber legs in half and tie an overhand knot as shown below. Tighten the knot to create a joint.



5a. Tie in the knotted legs with the loop in the front and the knotted leg at the back as shown below. You want the femur to be slightly longer than the abdomen.



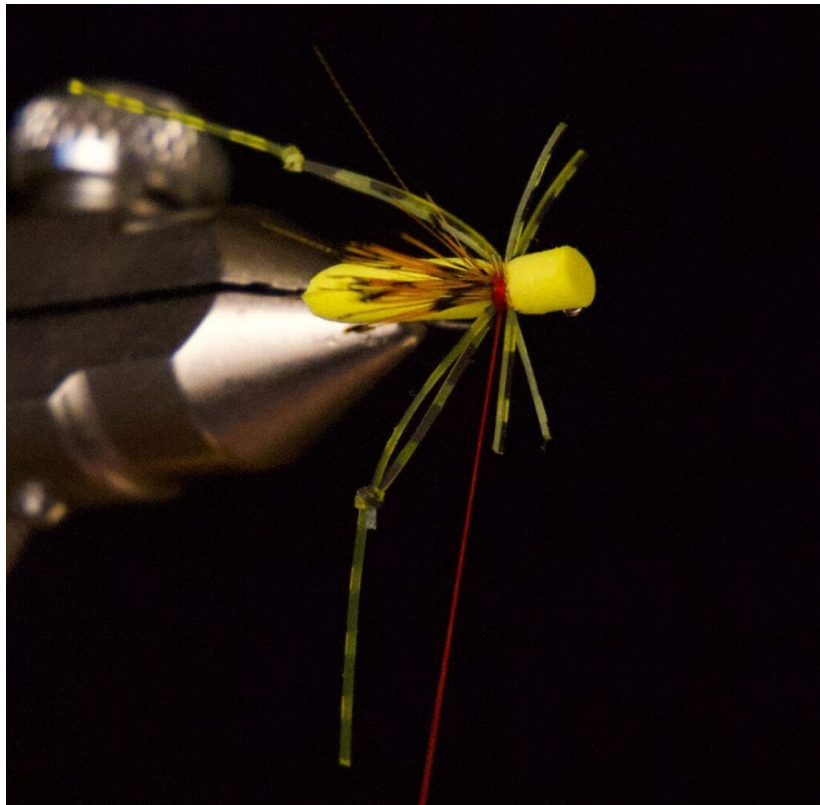
5b. Cut one of the double strands of rubber below the knee as shown. I normally pick the top strand of rubber, as leaving the bottom strand makes for a bigger angle in the knee if that makes sense.



5c. Create front legs by cutting the loop in the middle of the bend.



6. A top angle showing the front legs and the nicely splayed out hind legs.



7. Tie in a small amount of elk hair for the outer wing (optional for a more buggy feel). It also pushes the pheasant tippets down a little.



8. Add super glue to the thread on the hook shank and crease of the foam.



9. Add black eyes with a marker. Boom, that's my version of Ed's Hopper!

