

HISTORIC CATSKILL STREAMERS



9 April 2018

This is an *initial compilation* of Catskill Streamer flies compiled to share with the membership and others who are interested knowing more about certain aspects of the history of Catskill streamer flies.

The hope is that we can add to this list over time; i.e., make it a living document as we learn more about Catskill Streamers.

The current list of Streamers are:

1. Little Rainbow Trout
2. Bumblepuppy
3. Black Nose Dace
4. Esopus Bucktail (a.k.a.; Bi-Buck)
5. Neversink Shinner

Paul Dolbec

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Little Rainbow Trout



Originated by *Samuel R. Slaymaker II* of Gap, Pennsylvania

Research indicates that this pattern is from Sam Slaymaker's trout fly series circa 1950-1960's. They were typically tied on 6x long streamer hooks and were sparsely dressed; i.e., 7 to 10 fibers of each color bucktail and slightly more of badger or squirrel tail.

- **Body:** Pinkish-white Fur
- **Tail:** A small bunch of green bucktail slightly longer than the gap of the hook.
- **Ribbing:** Narrow Flat Silver Tinsel.
- **Throat:** A very small bunch of pink bucktail, as long as the tail.
- **Wings:** Of four (4) very small separated bunches of hair, each extending beyond the tail. A very small bunch of white bucktail over which is a very small bunch of pink bucktail, slightly blended. Over this is a very small bunch of green bucktail, topped and slightly blended with a very small bunch of squirrel tail or natural badger hair. The wing's length is about 1/2 gap past the bend.
- **Cheeks:** Jungle Cock.
- **Head:** Black.

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Bumblepuppy Streamer Fly



Compiled by Deanna Birkholm and edited by Paul Dolbec

"This historic fly, originally tied both as a bucktail and as a streamer, evidently is the first of all the modern patterns of this type. Originated by the famous Theodore Gordon, creator of the popular Quill Gordon and father of the American dry fly; the Bumblepuppy actually is not one fly but rather several related patterns as developed by Mr. Gordon over many years prior to his death in 1915."

"Theodore Gordon (1854 - 1915), fisherman, writer, and professional fly tier, evidently named the **Bumblepuppy** with a purpose, for the literal translation is "whist played without rules." [whist is a card game.] Regarded as a fly for which there is no name, there are at least twenty known variations of the Bumblepuppy. Gordon would often enclose one such variation when filling orders for his customers. Widely regarded as the father of the American dry fly, some would argue that Theodore Gordon, "the American Walton and Sage of the Neversink," is also the father of the first commercially established American streamer and bucktail". The fly shown at the top of this article is supposed to have been tied by Gordon himself, although the recipe given is not for this fly.

The fly directly above, tied by Herman Christian, one of Gordon's fishing companions, who continued to tie this fly after Gordon became ill, for the public.

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According to Joseph D. Bates, Jr., in *Streamer Fly Tying & Fishing*; "Thus it would seem that the "twenty kinds of Bumblepuppies" tied from time to time by Theodore Gordon were a progressive attempt at what he thought was the ideal pattern. Since Mr. Gordon's research was cut short by his untimely death, evidently Mr. Christian's adaptation should be considered as the final version and as such it should be accepted. Quite obviously, Theodore Gordon was far in advance of his time in developing streamers and bucktails, since his early work compares favorably with that of others done decades later. Added to his fame as "the father of the American dry fly" should be equal fame for having originated the modern streamer fly and bucktail."

Bumblepuppy - as tied by Herman Christian of Neversink, NY

- **Hook:** Size 2 or 4 long shank streamer fly hook. The early Bumblepuppies were tied on regular wet fly hooks, usually in size 4 or 6. Long hooks were not available during Mr. Gordon's lifetime.
- **Head:** Black.
- **Tail:** A small bunch of red hackle fibers, rather long.
- **Body:** White wool or chenille, rather heavy.
- **Ribbing:** A single strand of red wool yarn.
- **Throat:** About two turns of a red and white neck hackle, mixed to make a very long but not heavily dressed collar.
- **Wing:** A bunch of white bucktail, extending slightly beyond the tail of the fly. The lower half of the bunch of bucktail is clipped off at about half its length after it has been tied in. Over the bucktail is a wing of two long but narrow matched sections of a brown turkey tail feather, extending as far as the beginning of the tail.

"The above evidently is the Bumblepuppy preferred by Theodore Gordon. In using it, Mr. Christian found that better results were obtained by dressing the body with white chenille, without the red wool ribbing." The fly was noted for taking big native trout and landlocked salmon, brown trout, bass, walleyed pike and atlantic salmon.

Credits: Quoted text, recipe and photos from *Streamer Fly Tying & Fishing* by Joseph D. Bates, Jr., published by Stackpole Books. ~ DLB

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Black Nose Dace



The following description of the Black Nose Dace was extracted from a submission by Doug Saball with added notes by Will Taylor;

<http://globalflyfisher.com/streamers/fish/blacknosedace/blacknosedace.htm>

This small minnow, about 2 1/2 inches, may be distinguished from other minnows by the black lateral band which extends around the snout backward through the eye to the tail. The body is plumply rounded in front and compressed behind. The back is olive-green to dark brown in color while the lower sides and belly are silvery-white. Scattered over the back and sides are darkened scales. In breeding season males, have a rust-red coloration on the lower sides, and some have orange or red coloration on the pectoral fins.

The following description of the Black Nose Dace was extracted from “A Book of Trout Flies” by Preston Jennings, 1935. It provides evidence of the Dace being tied with saddles and marabou as well as a using bucktail.

“The particular minnow which seems to appeal to the appetite of the Catskill trout is called the Black Nosed Dace the first one of these flies to come to the attention of the writer was called the Esopus Bucktail. In any case the Bucktail and the Streamer are both successful in cloudy and roily water.”

“A dark badger hackle, which has a white or yellow ground with a black stripe in the center, is ideal for the Black Nose Dace. “Jungle cock feathers may also be added if desired”.

“Maribou has recently been adapted for use in Streamer flies.”

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- **Popular sizes:** 6, 8, 10
- **Hook Type:** 4 X long streamer
- **Thread:** Black 6/0
- **Tail:** Short stubby red wool if using flat silver tinsel for body.
- **Body:** Flat silver tinsel or fine silver Mylar piping
- **Ribbing:** Oval silver tinsel if body is flat silver tinsel.
- **Wing:** Brown bucktail over black bucktail over sparse white bucktail.
- **Other Materials:** Tag: red 3/0 thread to secure end of Mylar piping body.

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Esopus Bucktail (a.k.a.; Bi-Buck)



The following description was extracted from “Streamer Fly Tying and Fishing” by Joe Bates Jr., 1950. It provides reference to the Esopus Bucktail mentioned by Preston Jennings

“This fly was originated by William Mills and Sons, of New York City, and originally was tied with a yellow tail. Since 1935 the red tail has been standard. This fly is very successful for large brown trout (and other species of trout) on the Esopus River of New York State, for which it is named. A more popular version of the *Esopus* bucktail is shown in this book as the *Bi-Buck* bucktail.”

- **Head:** Black
- **Tail:** Red bucktail, cut off sharply, one-third as long as the wing. A good sized bunch of bucktail is used to give the effect of a paintbrush when cut off.
- **Body:** Medium gold or silver tinsel. The body is first filled in with wool to enlarge it before adding the tinsel. This fat body is designed to give a large, shiny area. The body and the tail should be the same length.
- **Wing:** In any of the following combination bucktail over White bucktail (hence Bi-Buck); Black, Brown, Red. The wing is half longer than the body and tail combined. It is raised to a 45 degree angle to show the body more clearly and to give more action in the water. The wing is rather full dressed, and a jungle cock feather is optional as a cheek.

N.B. The Bi-Buck has some variations to this pattern and is also described in Bates' book.

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Neversink Shinner



Please refer to the March 2018 Gazzett for further details provided by Ed Ostapczuk.

The pattern was originated by Bucky Stearns - the Neversink Shiner. *“The fly was designed as a generic imitation of several forage fish in the Catskill watershed. It resembles a **silvery Notropis minnow** with hints of blue, lavender and olive but mimics other baitfish like alewives and emerald shiners. I use it in water slightly high and off color or in the low light at dusk and dawn.”*

- **Hook:** 4XL or 6XL, size 2 to 8
- **Thread:** White Gudebrod GX2
- **Tail:** Tips of two white hackles or white marabou, one-quarter the length of the body
- **Body:** Silver or Pearl Mylar
- **Throat:** Sparse white Impala or Bucktail extending just past the bend; red marabou (short) tied below
- **Underwing:** White bucktail under blue impala under 12 to 20 strands of Krystal Flash in the color desired
- **Wing:** Four white hackles
- **Overwing:** Small bunch Wapsi Pearlescent Wing n' Flash, same length as the tail
- **Topping:** Peacock herl with three strands of Krystal Flash in the desired color on each side of the wings
- **Cheeks:** Silver pheasant (like a Gray Ghost), prepared by coating with lacquer; when lacquer dries, paint on a yellow lacquer eye; when that dries, add a pupil of black lacquer