

The Catskill Fly Tyers Guild



GAZETTE

August 2007

The Annual Catskill Fly Tyers Guild Picnic will be held on Saturday, August 18, from noon to 4:00 P.M. at the Elsie and Harry Darbee and Matthew Vinciguerra Memorial Pavilion at the Catskill Fly Fishing Center and Museum, 1031 Old Route 17, Livingston Manor, NY. Bring a dish to pass, your own plates and silverware, and your own beverages.

There will be a casting contest! Also, bring two flies that are alike—one to trade and one for the guild—if possible, in separate film containers.

Please let us know whether you want hamburgers or hot dogs and how many will be coming with you. Guests are welcome, as long as we can plan for them. Also, let us know what dish you plan to bring, so we can avoid having a macaroni-salad tasting with twenty-five entrants.

We could use some help with the cooking and the fly swap. For more information, to volunteer, or to RSVP, e-mail Bud Bynack at BBynack@cs.com with “Guild Picnic” in the subject line or call him at (914) 961-3521.

The Sullivan County Youth Outdoor Expo will be held on September 8 at Grahamsville Fairgrounds, Route 55, Grahamsville, NY, from 10 A.M. to 3:30 P.M. The Catskill Fly Tyers Guild has appeared at this event for several years, and bringing the Catskill style of fly tying to an audience of young people is intrinsic to our mission. We need members to volunteer to help kids tie a fly. We sometimes teach a little fly casting to them, as well. We have one volunteer so far. There are usually about two hundred kids in attendance from all over Sullivan County. Everything is free to the kids. They find out about the event through their schools and the many posters that are distributed throughout the county. If you’re interested in volunteering, contact Judie DV Smith at darbee1@juno.com, or you can call (607) 498-6024.

Have you ever looked at a pattern book, or just looked at pictures of flies, when for some reason, one stands out and begs you to tie it and fish with it? For me, this was the Black Prince. I was looking at all the plates of wet flies in Ray Bergman’s *Trout*, and the Black Prince practically pleaded with me to give this pattern a try.

Why, I really don’t know. Maybe it’s the simplicity of the thing: black, with some bling and a touch of red. When I first looked at the fly in Bergman’s book, what I saw was a fly with real beauty, and right away, I pictured it catching fish. I sat down at my bench, tied this little gem, and fell in love with it even more. I saw potential in this fly, but the key proved to be when and where to fish it—the weather and stream conditions under which this fly works best.

The Wet-Fly Corner

With Andy Brasko, a Genuine Wet-Fly Fisherman



I have been and still am experimenting with all the wet-fly patterns in *Trout* to see when and where all the patterns work. I pick three or four patterns for each year, tie them, and try them throughout the season. This experiment has been going on for about five or six years now. I have found this to be a fun project with great success. Once I find when a pattern works reliably, I note it and try the pattern again the following year around the same time.

When I first I tried this pattern two years ago, I would tie it on and fish with it with no success at all. Then, in late September, I was fishing on a chilly, dark, overcast, rainy day on the Beaverkill. I first started out with a Ken Lockwood streamer and had numerous hookups. Soon the fly was chewed up and was finished, and I had only one. So I looked into the fly box at my wet flies and decided to give the Black Prince in a size 8 a try. I made a cast or two and didn't get a hit, but a few casts later, I hooked up with a lovely Beaverkill brown trout. I was so enthusiastic that I kept fishing with the fly and landed four more browns in about twenty minutes.

I thought that since the fly worked in the Catskills, it would work on my home waters. Wrong. For some reason, this pattern did not work at all under the same conditions—until November. A size 6 would not entice the fish, but dropping down to a size 8 brought success, and going down to a size 10 produced the most—I will not fish anything smaller than a size 12. I also noted that in New Jersey in November, whether I fished the Black Prince in bright sun or on an overcast day did not matter. Maybe it has something to do with the angle and duration of the light late in the year.

I have fished this fly again for the past two years with the same success. The Black Prince has found a home in my fly box. I hope that you try this fly and have as much success with it.

The Black Prince

Hook: Mustad 3906, size 6 to 10

Thread: Black Danville 6/0

Tag: Size 16 or 18 gold Mylar tinsel

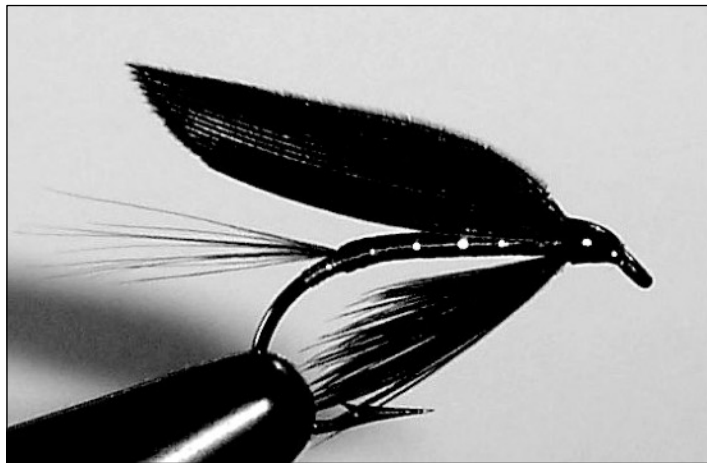
Tail: Red saddle hackle, 9 to 12 fibers

Body: Two strands of Danville black floss wrapped from the back to the front

Rib: Size 16 or 18 gold Mylar tinsel

Beard/False Hackle: Black schlappen

Wing: Paired black goose or duck quills





Fran Better's Other Fly

By Mike Hogue

Each season, it seems that some fly makes its way to the top of my boxes. During the 2007 season, I have been experimenting with several new flies I made over the winter. Of course, the one for which I had the least expectations is my hot, go-to fly this year.

Several months ago, I was rereading sections of *The Fran Better's Fly Fishing, Fly Tying Pattern Guide*. He mentions one pattern that I decided to try. It's a parachute, nothing special—just another dry fly. I made a few. I was quite surprised by the success that it brought. On the first cast, I tossed it into a pool, and fifteen to twenty trout attacked it. Simply amazing.

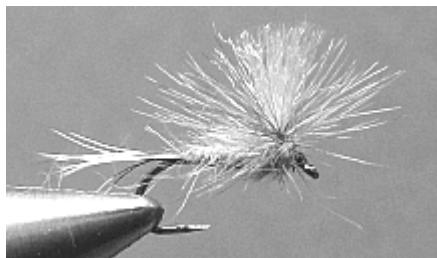
I thought, "Well, maybe that was just a fluke," so I tried it again. Same thing. I went fishing one evening and caught thirty trout and missed around twenty other takes on the same fly. Even more recently, I was fishing some deadfall trees, tossed it up in some fishy water, and nailed a hefty fourteen-inch brown. Walking back to my truck, I picked up another large fish from under yet another deadfall tree.

For anyone out of the loop or from other parts of the country (or planet), Fran Better is a fly tyer, rod builder and author based near the West Branch of the Ausable in the North Country. Although in the UK, when you say "the North Country," they think of this as the Mecca for soft-hackle flies, the North Country to most New Yorkers means the Adirondacks. And there is an Ausable in Michigan, as well as the one in New York. Here we say "AH-sable," while in Michigan, they say "Ausssssable." In any case, Fran Better is also the creator of the Ausable Wulff, the Ausable Bomber, the Usual, the Haystack, and several other really great trout patterns. This one, though, I don't think has any grand title. It is just a parachute—Fran Better's other fly.

For many years, I have tied parachutes, and I have always preferred to use Antron yarn for the post. My favorite color is cream, because it isn't a superbright fluorescent color and it is easier to see than just white. Also, my theory is that the cream is a bit less harsh and not as likely to spook the fish. It must be so, because I have caught so many, using this over the years. Also, if you fish with polarized sunglasses, the sparkle cream is easy to see in low light.

So I substituted my usual Antron sparkle yarn for the kip tail mentioned in Better's original pattern and found it to work very well. For hackle, I use a variegated dun cape that I got from Charlie Collins a while ago. This is one of those freaky-colored capes, and I picked it out of a stack of only ten or fifteen, so I can't imagine it is a very popular color. I've used some dun cree I got from him, as well. I should think that a medium dun or even just grizzly or cree would work, too.

would



Fran Better's Other Fly

Hook: Mustad 94840, size 12 to 16

Hackle: Barred dun variant or medium dun.

Light cree or grizzly dyed dun

be fine, too.

Body: Natural golden Australian opossum

Tail: Woodchuck

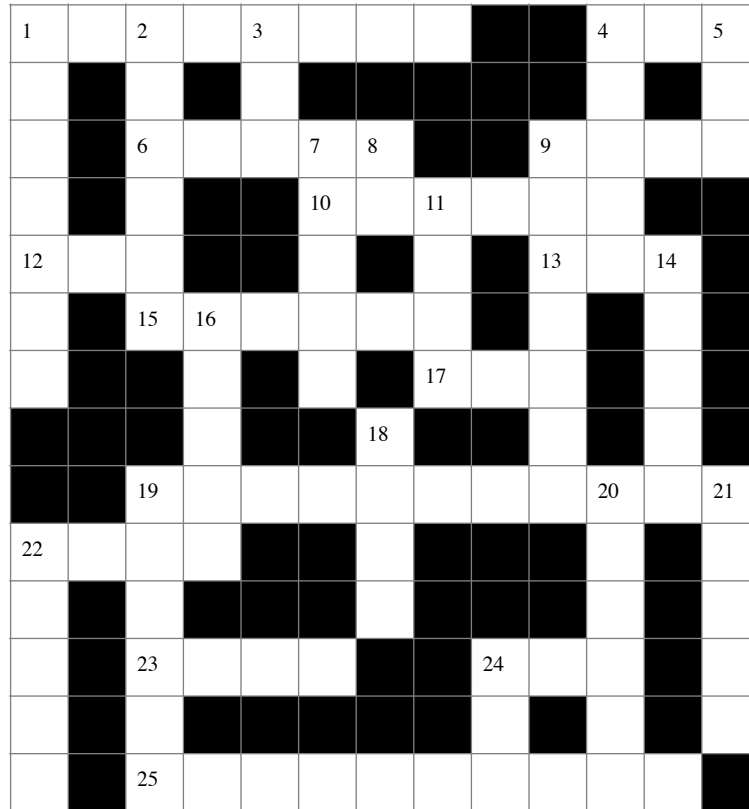
Thread: Yellow or yellow-olive

Post: Cream Antron

1. This is a pretty basic pattern. Start the thread and wind it back to above the hook point.
2. Cut and clean a bunch of woodchuck guard hairs—about seven to ten fibers. Comb the fur and put it in a hair stacker to even the ends. Tie in a tail equal in length to the hook shank.
3. Next cut one bunch of Antron and fold it over. This will be the post. Tie in the bunch facing the tail (not the eye) and clip off the bundle at a 45-degree angle. Make three to four turns around the post to bind the post together.
4. Wind the thread back and forth up and down the hook shank to level out the underbody, then move the thread back to the position above the hook point. Dub the thread and wrap the dubbing counterclockwise on the hook. As I wrap the thread forward, the dubbing binds into itself, making the body very durable.
5. Wind the dubbed thread up to the post. Tie in the hackle by tying the stem across the hook shank.
6. When I wind parachute hackle, I make successive locks by tugging a bit on the hackle as I turn. Make a turn toward the back of the fly, tug down, turn forward, tug down, and so on. This locks in each successive turn.
7. Tug hard on the wrapped hackle, raise the front fibers, and tie down. Clip the hackle off and make several wraps back to the post. Take a small pinch of dubbing, dub the tread, and make a few wraps in front of the post. I add a bit of dubbing to the head because it helps to balance the fly. If you crowd the eye, you won't have enough room to make the head.
8. Whip finish the head and cut off the tag of thread.
9. I add a drop of thin head cement to the center of the post and let it dry overnight. After it is dry, I crush the Antron post a bit to soften it up. Then the fly is ready to fish.

There you go. I think the most critical part is the color. The light golden color is a dead ringer for Hendricksons, March Browns, and some light caddises. I make this one in the standard red-brown Australian opossum. In *The Fran Betters Fly Tying Pattern Guide*, Betters lists muskrat, which some might say makes the fly an Adams.

A Fly-Fishing Crossword Puzzle Contest



Puzzle by Allan Podell

Allan will send a dozen flies, three each of four patterns, to the first person who mails or e-mails him a *completely accurate*, fully filled-out puzzle. Be sure to include your name and mailing address. Send entries to Allan Podell, 100 Glen Avenue, Elmira, NY 14905, or apodell@stny.rr.com. For those who receive an electronic version of the *Gazette*, the puzzle is in the form of a table in Microsoft Word. It can be copied and pasted into another word-processing document, then printed or e-mailed. For those who receive hard copies, photocopy the puzzle if you don't want to lose these pages of the newsletter. (To get you started, elsewhere in this issue, we've given away 22 across.) Answers in the October *Gazette*.

Across

- 1) What trout do.
- 4) What anglers are known to do.
- 6) Excellent general impressionistic dry fly.
- 9) Excellent dubbing for small flies.
- 10) A fly.
- 12) Needed by those who C&K.
- 13) Not wanted on rod or line.
- 15) "Got it!"
- 17) Tippet goes here.
- 19) Early season fly.

Down

- 1) Type of.
- 2) Connects line to tippet.
- 3) Big water.
- 4) Fly-fishing painter.
- 5) Terrestrial.
- 7) Usually small fly.
- 8) Saturday night (abbrev.).
- 9) A fly-fishing method in Fox's book.
- 11) Fertilize, pollinate, etc.
- 14) One of the no-see-ums.

- 22) ____ Better.
- 23) Useful tool.
- 24) Author.
- 25) The best to teach.

- 16) Renowned British fly-fishing author.
- 18) Not desirable.
- 19) Teacher and author.
- 20) English riverkeeper.
- 21) Insect stage.
- 22) First name of 20 down.
- 24) A series of salmon flies.

Book Review

How to Catch the Biggest Trout of Your Life, by Landon Mayer
Wild River Press, 2007; \$29.95, hardbound

Those who know me well have suggested that instead of a book like *How to Catch the Biggest Trout of Your Life*, what I really need is a book called *How Actually to Catch a Trout Now and Then, for a Change*, a sort of *Trout Fishing for Dummies* for real dummies. In fact, however, books on basic angling skills abound. Putting their always excellent advice to use is just a matter of getting out on the stream and persevering. I blush to admit that when I was growing up in Cooperstown and a tourist asked, “How do you get to the Baseball Hall of Fame?” I sometimes replied with the classic punch line, “Practice!” In some ways, though, that’s what becoming a better angler comes down to. That goes for catching big fish, too, if that becomes your goal (or obsession), as it seems to do for many fly fishers.

In addition to perseverance and practice, though, targeting lunkers requires a special kind of focus—on strategy, tactics, gear, and fish-fighting skills, and Landon Mayer comprehensively walks the goal-oriented (or obsessed) through what it will take to appear in the sort of grip-and-grin fish-porn photos that festoon this book. A lot of this is common sense. You have to fish for them when they are present and feeding, which often means on the move to spawn in the autumn for browns and in the spring for rainbows, and at dawn or in the gathering dark—not always the most comfortable times of those seasons. You need to feed them what they’re eating, which surprisingly, on some Western tailwater streams, at least, can be midges, not necessarily big forage fish. You need stout gear to land them—including the sort of humongous net that Mayer is seen packing in some of the pictures here, which would look more at home on a striper charter and which it would take a certain amount of chutzpah to carry on a trout stream.

What I found most valuable, however, was the chapter in how to fight and land the biggest trout of your life. Even a blind pig finds an acorn once in a while, and dummies like me are woefully unprepared by experience for dealing with a truly big fish—playing, landing and releasing it responsibly. California guide and fly tyer Andy Burk says that he once saw someone lose—yes—the fish of a lifetime, a thirty-plus-inch brown up from Lake Shasta to spawn in the McCloud River, because neither the angler nor those who sought to help him had a clue about how to land a fish that big. If—or rather, when—you finally do hook the fish of a lifetime, the thirty bucks spent on this book is going to look like a good investment.

—Bud Bynack

A Fly Fisher’s Life List

By Mike Hogue

It is said that a fly fisher evolves along multiple planes. First is the development stage. A beginning fly fisher learns the basics of how the tackle works, different sorts of flies, and how to

catch fish. Ideally, the skills develop to a stage where the person starts his or her more serious pursuits: catching large fish, catching difficult fish, and then catching exotic fish or large fish that are difficult to catch and to land. I have been down all these steps.

For some, this evolution involves a series of various offshoots. Fly tying usually hits the artistic types; casting is appealing to the jock types—male or female—who were former athletes. For some of the team-minded, there is now a fly-fishing world competition that pits one country's fly-fishing team against another's.

Still others believe that fly fishing is an exotic pursuit that requires you to acquire the latest gear and travel to exotic places. There are even fly-fishing travel agents to help you sort out the best trip, the best lodge, and the most exotic locations in which to chase fish. Books such as *50 Places to Fly Fish Before You Die* have only helped to reinforce this idea. Each year, there are really hot locations, hot guides, and hot fish to pursue. One year it was peacock bass in Brazil, another time it was mahseer in India, another year it was bonefish in Cuba, and another favorite was salmon in Iceland. The latest hot trip is an exotic ocean ship equipped with jet boats and helicopters that takes you to Chile and Argentina to fish for sea-run browns in the Patagonia region. These trips require big bucks, loads of time to travel, and a desire to see it all and experience it all.

In a sense, I think these seekers of the exotic are sort of half right. What really bothers me is the idea that I have to pay someone to tell me where to stand, what to fish with, and where to throw it. Usually, this coaching occurs in a public space. Learning a fishery, learning a place, learning its rhythms and the feel for it is much more than just tossing an object and doing as I am told. As Steve Jobs of Apple once said, "The journey is its own reward."

One fly fisher I know has what he calls a "life list." This is more than a list of trophies to chase. He has other goals in mind: not just what he wants to catch, but where he wants to go and how he intends to catch the fish. The idea is borrowed from the bird-watching world. Bird-watchers have life lists of birds they see, but they also document where they went, as well as the species they saw and when they saw it.

I haven't committed to this as a fly-fishing goal yet, but I have made accomplishments along the way toward completing such a list. I've caught jumbo carp, really big smallmouths, fair-sized largemouths, large crappies, walleyes, pike, flathead catfish, big bluegills, hefty rainbows, nice browns, brook trout, cutthroats, salmon, and steelhead. I have even caught a McCloud redband trout, an imperiled species, from one of last places in the world to hold some of the original stock. All my fish were caught on flies! And I caught these trophies without a guide, on public water.

None of these particular species was a goal—none was a specific catch I had in mind. I just wanted to go fishing and try different places and catch things that were hard to catch in places that were offbeat or interesting. Since I am not a rich man and am not able to travel to loads of unusual places, I have generally chased fish in my own backyard. I have fished such bizarre places as office parks, golf courses, and amusement park ponds. I even have caught fish in irrigation ditches and in city water systems.

One of my latest additions to the pursuit of big fish was catching a muskellunge on a fly. Muskies are a species of big pike that usually live in northern regions of the United States. Much of the time, these are stocked fish, because they can't reproduce. Musky fishermen are a really bizarre group. The fish is considered by most to be very difficult to catch and is ranked by some to be even harder to catch than salmon. (Atlantic salmon are called the "fish of a thousand casts," so muskies must "the fish of ten thousand casts.")

Musky anglers generally use all sorts of spoons and look for certain places and conditions to catch the fish. They have this weird science to predict the convergence all of these things, and when the conditions are right, they head out. The fish are so difficult to catch that the fishing is evaluated by getting follows: "I got five follows today"—not "I caught five fish." When I first heard this, I

shook my head. Someone can spend a serious amount of money and time just to get a fish to chase a lure.

Catching them with flies was almost unheard of. There are now some fly fishers who specialize in this kind of fishing, and there is a new book out on the subject. As tackle has gotten better and fishing skills have improved, so has the ability to catch muskie.

Recently, I was out fishing in one of my local lakes, Lake Cumo. Lake Cumo is not really a very popular lake in our area. It is mostly surrounded by private houses and has little public access. The houses are small trailers or cabins, and most of the houses are quite modest. Compared with some of the large estates and vineyards on some of our surrounding lakes, the place is a downright redneck lake of the worst order.

Originally, I was told about Lake Cumo by Darryl, a former workmate of mine. This fellow was an old, crotchety type who loved to fish. He used to keep a boat tied up down on Cayuga Lake. During the noon hour, he and a buddy would go to the lake and fish. They claimed that they always made it back to work on time, but I have my doubts. A good many stories were told about these fellows' exploits, but the best might be the Cayuga lake trout they sold in New York City for fifteen dollars a pound that were really carp. One spring, they caught loads of carp, filleted them, and sold them to a fish market vendor. Never having seen lake trout, the unsuspecting vendor assumed that these must be the real thing. After hearing these stories, it was difficult to believe anything that they said.

At Darryl's urging, though, I began fishing Lake Cumo and really began to like the place. One of the persistent rumors about Lake Cumo is that there are some really big muskies in the lake. A few years ago, the state stocked them (or so the story goes). Still, I didn't believe it.

The only access on Lake Cumo is a landing near an old bar. You must boat the lake to fish it. I put in my kayak, checked my rod, and picked out some flies to use. My goals were pretty modest. I hoped to catch some bluegills and maybe a few bass. As I boated along the north shore of the lake, I started casting to some fish rising to a hatch of ginger-colored female damselflies. I tied on a reasonable imitation and was promptly skunked. I cast in front of the fish, to the side, and right in the center. Nothing. I reeled up and kept paddling. I found a few willing fish along a bank and a few others along a cove below a tree. I saw a nice weed line with lily pads and thought this was my chance for a bass. I tied on a pattern I made from Bob Clouser's new book, *Clouser's Flies*, a Crippled Minnow, which is a sort of a Muddler tied with marabou and deer hair in red and white, and I started fishing.

I cast along the front of the weed bed. All of a sudden, I saw a swirl in the water, and the line stalled. Then there was a yank, and the line started smoking out the guides. Wow! I had a big fish on. At first I thought it was a bass. Pretty soon, the fish took off and headed out to the center of the lake. I put the fish on the reel and started cranking. The tip bent as I got some pressure on and started to fight this brute. The fish was not pleased. I reeled and pulled, the rod bent further under the stress, the boat spun a few times, and when I realized how big a fish this was, I panicked. I wasn't ready to catch a musky. I didn't have a bite tippet or a jaw spreader, just my regular freshwater tackle. I figured "Oh well, we'll just see how this goes."

The fish rose and crashed, and I caught a glimpse of the size of this monster. It was a very large fish. The tail and back half of the fish alone was at least fifteen to twenty inches long, making this one weigh in at twenty to thirty pounds. Incredible! I started to put some muscle on him, and as I reeled and played, the rod bent harder and moved from side to side. The fish smoked out some more line, and I reeled it back in. Finally, I got the line back in and thought I had the best of him. I took a deep breath and pulled up hard. The fly shot up in the air, loaded with weeds. My catch had dragged me through a weed bed and pulled the fly out. Just amazing.

And of course it is all true. Sorry the photos didn't turn out. I have a nice picture of the lake. One for the life list? Well sort of. . . . Now I guess I have to tie some pike and musky flies. Anybody for some weird science? I heard there is a new solunar-table fishing watch, and I think I can still find that barometer I got for Christmas. Oh yes, it was a full moon the other night, too.

The Catskill Fly Tyers Guild *Gazette* is issued six times a year to members. Membership is only \$10.00 per year. New, first-time members also get a **FREE** copy of the booklet *Favorite Rivers, Favorite Flies*, as well as discounts on guild patches and pins. **WANT TO JOIN THE GUILD or GIVE A FRIEND a GREAT GIFT?** Just complete this form, then mail it and a check to:

Bob Osburn, 3 Good Time Court, Goshen, NY 10924. Indicate if it is a new membership or a renewal.

➤➤➤➤➤ Remember, memberships renew in February. <<<<<<<

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Judie DV Smith, e-mail: darbee1@juno.com

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E-mail address: _____

Would you be willing to accept the *Gazette* via e-mail?

Yes (please provide) _____

No _____



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are welcome at the editor's discretion. Without the articles, information, for-sale or want ads, cartoons, newsworthy information, and whatever else is interesting and fun that members submit, this newsletter simply becomes a meeting announcement. Send submissions to Bud Bynack, BBynack@cs.com or 69 Bronxville Road, Apt. 4G, Bronxville, NY, 10708, (914) 961-3521.