

A deadly little fly

By Ian Cox



Pheasant tail is my most used fly tying material by far and the orange hotspot is probably by far the fly I tie most of. This is not just because I use it a lot but also because I tend to tie up a few for mates on our annual Sterkfontein trip.

I was reminded of this on a trip to Velorenkloof recently. The river was a write off due to the drought so we were forced onto the dams. Now dam fishing in Mpumalanga is not like KZN. The fishing pressure is huge and the fishing is much more in the put and take space than we are accustomed to. This means that the fish are much smaller and surprisingly quite selective in their feeding habits. You can catch an awful lot of them but you have to crack the code.

The code turned out to be a little hot spot variation I tied for a Sterkfontein trip a couple of years ago. Tied on a #16 or #18 hook it is a fairly standard hotspot save for the bright orange seal fur collar and the orange tag at the tail.

The tag is important. It's an idea the competition guys have cottoned onto and which John Yelland told me about a couple of years ago. You use fly line backing and it work a treat or at least it did at Verlorenkloof.

Orange certainly seemed to be the colour of the week with local fly guide dredging fish after fish off the bottom with an orange zonker dumbbell eyed headed monstrosity that defied description. I did not have anything quite so outlandish in my fly fishing box but for some of the party my #16 ptn hotspot twitched off the bottom did the trick.



I have a theory about why the fly worked. Orange backing is fluorescent and young trout see in the UV range at least till there are about 2 years old. The trout in Velorenkloof are in the 500g to 800g

range and are all of an age where they can see in UV spectrum. This is unlike the lunkers we target in KZN which tend to be getting on a bit and consequently are attracted more to size and shape rather than colour.