

Contrast, movement, vulnerability

By Ed Herbst



The September issue of the Bobbin contained two interesting articles – the pine cone-eating trout of Heatherdon Dam and the article by Laurence Davies on still water retrieves.

The latter interested me because it related the story of how John Mills achieved success with a dead drift Bow Tie Buzzer. This was the ingenious invention of Frank Sawyer which imitated a Buzzer pupa at the most vulnerable stage of its life cycle, the moment of eclosion when it is trying to penetrate the surface film and is hanging in a vertical position.

The Bow Tie Buzzer was apparently created between 1958 and 1969

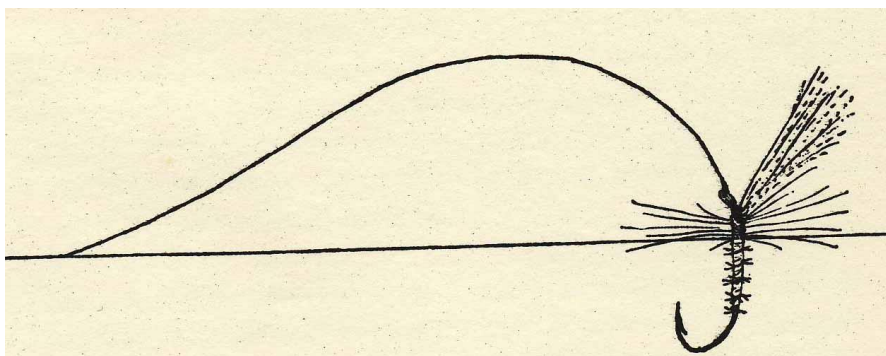
<http://thelimpcobra.com/tag/frank-sawyers-bow-tie-buzzer/>

About ten years later Vincent Marinaro created his Hanging Emerger which used a Riffle Hitch knot to force the hook into a vertical position

http://www.netknots.com/fishing_knots/riffle-hitch

More than a century ago fly anglers realised that trout were more interested in the emerging stage of the mayfly than the adult because it was more vulnerable to predation and part of the answer was to do away with the tail which resulted in the hook bend sinking. This was combined with a wing projecting forward rather than being posted

in the upright position and the result was the Mole Fly with the French tying a similar pattern called the Pont Audemer, named after a Normandy town.



The French version of the Mole Fly, the Pont Audemer

Contemporary fly tyers were quick to adapt the concept using CDC feathers and if you Google Images CDC Shuttlecock and Images CDC Plume Tip you will see the results.

Another way to force an emerger pattern into a vertical position is to weight the hook bend and Swiss CDC guru, Marc Petitjean, places a few turns of silver wire at the hook bend of his emerger patterns to achieve this stance.

This can also be achieved by attaching a nymph pattern to the hook bend of a Klinkhåmer – the Klink ‘n Dink.

Serendipitously, the Bobbin arrived at the same time as Grayling, quarterly journal of The Grayling Society in the UK.

An article by Louis Noble shows that he has created an emerger for the Klink ‘n Dink technique which I first saw in Charles Meck’s book, *Fishing Tandem Flies*.

It involves attaching a mono loop at the hook bend and then suspending the nymph from that. Noble first ties in a wing post of pink Tiemco Aero Wing projecting forward over the hook eye, then the mono loop. He then ties the fly backwards towards the tail, first adding a grizzly hackle behind the wing post followed by a dubbed body before whip finishing in the gap between the body and the mono loop.



Louis Noble’s version of the Klink ‘n Dink as tied by Ian Cox.

Datus Proper, in his brilliant book, *What the Trout Said*, wrote that one of the greatest trout preservation methods ever invented was a stiff extended body pattern on a short shanked hook and the Meck method seems to contravene that dictum about not having something stiff at the rear of the fly.

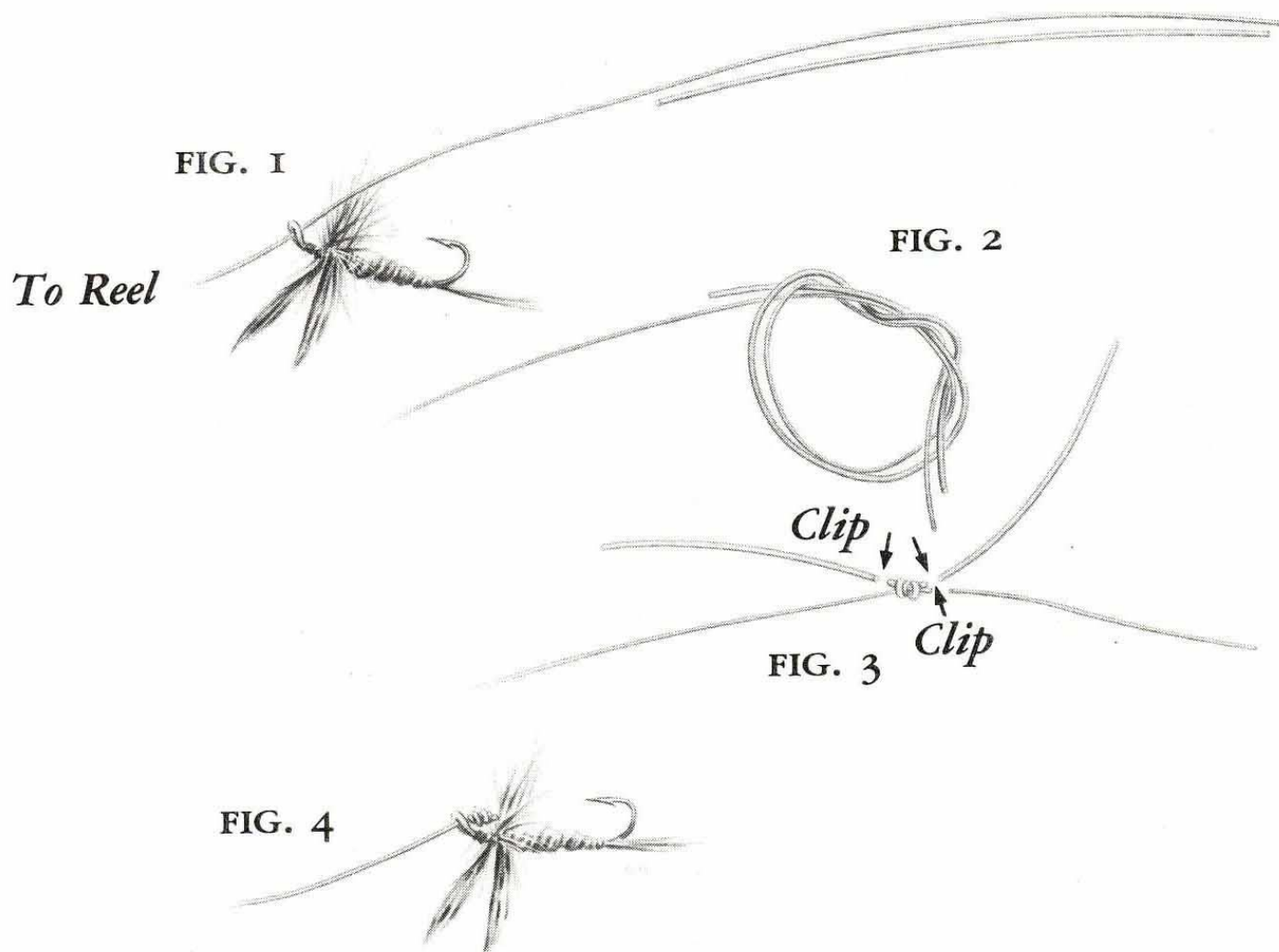
Besides, I don't like fishing tandem rigs because it increases the chances of getting entangled in vegetation on small streams or the chances of foul-hooking fish.

My take on the Marinaro and Sawyer methods was to combine the Daaichi/Orvis Big Eye hook in its straight eye form in combination with Art Lee's Surgeon's Swivel knot and then to grease the leader right down to the fly with Mucilin. The Big Eye hook increased the potential of movement in the fly during the drift because it can more easily pivot around the tippet. My first examples created an air bubble ahead of the hook eye as illustrated in my article in the April/May 2011 issue of *Flyfishing* magazine but I quickly dropped that idea for a plain foam post

<http://thelimpcobra.com/2011/10/31/the-ss-knot/>

http://www.africanangler.com/fly_article.asp?id=745

THE SURGEON'S SWIVEL



Art Lee's Surgeon's Swivel knot



A Vertical Emerger, tied by the author using an ethafoam post

Greasing the leader down to the fly is generally frowned on as I explained in an article '*Greased tippets and pocket water*' on Tom Sutcliffe's website and one of the disadvantages of a sinking tippet which I did not mention there is sound disturbance. If your tippet sinks it means that your fly is dragged underwater on every back cast and it emerges, particularly if it is a big fly like a Variant, with a loud, sucking pop.

The greased leader helps to keep the Vertical Emerger in its upright position.

When I tie the stop knot, I hold the fly in the shadow of my body, apply some Loon UV Knot Sense to lubricate it before tightening and then expose the knot to the sun or to the little UV torch sold by Loon. This cements the knot and makes it less likely to fail.

Clearly, the greater the difference between the diameter of the nylon and the hook eye, the more easily the fly can react to the tug of the currents. The hook that most facilitates this is the Orvis Big Eye Hook in straight eye style. The Big Eye Hook, a Daiichi design, has a hook eye 50% bigger than normal but which adds only 18% to the weight of the standard wire hook. (I used a Partridge Klink hook in the photograph herewith simply to make the fly easier to photograph.)

Rubber tails

Trout research indicates that movement and contrast enable them to locate prey but, of late, the concept of vulnerability is attracting increasing interest.

This was first brought to my attention in an article '*Anting the Hatch*' by Ken Miyata in the October 1982 issue of the American magazine *Flyfisherman*. Miyata found that even when trout were selectively feeding on a mayfly or caddis hatch, they would not refuse an ant. And in his 2008 book *Spring Creeks* Mike Lawson says: '*Most of the time I use beetles when I can't catch by matching the hatch.*'

I would argue that vulnerability is the defining factor here. Mayflies and caddis, unless they get stuck in the shuck, emerge rapidly resulting in splashy rises. The ant and the beetle are a sure thing - they are going nowhere other than downstream.

Bob Wyatt has written at length about this factor in articles punting his Deer Hair Emerger but I believe that by adding rubber tails to this fly he would be adding movement to vulnerability.

http://flyfishing-and-flytying.co.uk/articles/view/the_vulnerability_factor/

Besides my own success with my rubber-tailed Vertical Emerger, I have two anecdotal accounts to support this hypothesis. At my suggestion, Rhodes-based guide Tony Kietzman added rubber tails to his Klinks and, he says, the success rate increased substantially – so much so that he now calls this ‘improved’ version the Edhåmer.



Rubber tails from the trout's point of view

When a member of the Italian nation fly fishing team, Edoardo Ferrero visited Cape Town a decade ago he declared local streams to be ideal for soft hackles and Sean Mills became an instant convert. He told me that trout usually spooked when a nymph or dry fly approached the tail of a pool and the drift rate increased suddenly as the current speeded up. However, this animated the fibres of the soft hackle and the sudden movement often prompted a reflexive strike.

His flies were pretty prosaic, as soft hackles are – thread bodies and a turn of hen or gamebird hackle. When I suggested adding rubber tails he said: “Ed, when my flies stop catching fish, I’ll consider changing them”. Later, he confessed that he had tried rubber tails and they had definitely increased his strike rate.

The most delicate rubber tails are Tentacles made by the Montana Fly Company but Morne Bayman at The African Fly Angler mail order shop stocks an equivalent product, Daddy Long Legs by Hareline Dubbin and the tan version can be speckled with a black permanent marker to increase contrast.

Fly size

In the above-mentioned book by Datus Proper he writes that stream trout generally take flies #16 or smaller with less suspicion than bigger flies and this is because the average size of the insects they eat is around #20. Here are three links to articles that explain that:

<http://www.fosaf.co.za/tippetArchive-22.php>

<http://www.tomsutcliffe.co.za/fly-fishing/my-fly-fishing/item/905-surveys-on-insects-available-as-trout-food-and-how-to-sample-the-stomach-contents-of-trout.html>

<http://www.piscator.co.za/CPS2/index.php/trout-diet-in-the-fynbos-biome>

Fishing the Vertical Emerger

Although I have used ethafoam packaging material in the illustrated example of the Vertical Emerger my favourite post material is Orange Larva Lace dry fly foam. This is a really special material. It is easier to tie with than other foams because it is softer and more compressible and it has a subtle sheen to it. The orange foam post is easy to see and, having on so many occasions had trout rise to my orange yarn strike indicators, I don't see the colour as a disadvantage.

Make the fly easier to follow by incorporating yellow Stren mono in your leader, coat the knots with Loon orange or red UV fly paint or by coating the knot with a tiny dab of a putty indicator like Loon Biostrike.

I rose a trout on my very first cast with the Vertical Emerger and hooked it on the next cast but what was interesting is that I was casting downstream. I had just chucked it downstream to see what it looked like on the water while waiting for my companions to finish fishing the run upstream of me.



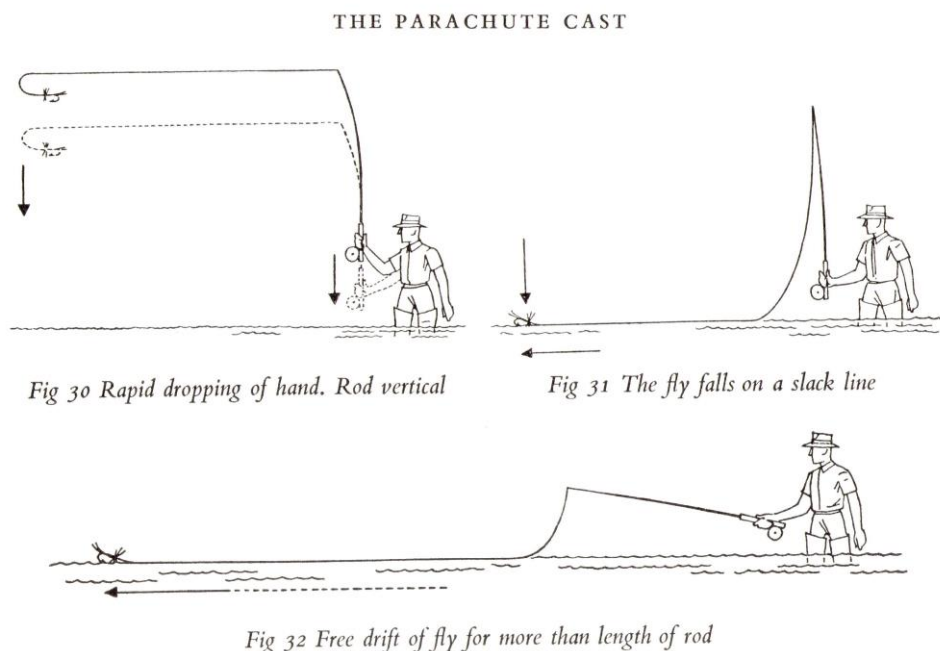
First trout on a Vertical Emerger

To an increasing extent fly anglers are exploring downstream casting because the fly reaches the fish ahead of the tippet and the Parachute Cast facilitates this.

Charles Ritz introduced this cast in his mid-1950s book, *A Fly Fisher's Life* and it was subsequently adopted and popularised by Joe Humphreys in the USA in an excellent series of videos.

Here is how he describes it: *'With the hand at approximately shoulder level, make false casts and drop the line while arresting the rod at twelve (the vertical position), lower the hand as much as possible while continuing to hold the rod vertical. The line will then fall on the water with the maximum of slack.'*

'To retard the drag of the fly to the maximum, follow the line by lowering the rod point to nine (o'clock).'



The Parachute Cast illustration from Ritz's book

Trout often hold in the bow wave immediately ahead of a midstream rock and then about a metre behind it when the currents split by the rock converge again.

I found that such holding lies were sometimes, depending on light conditions, easier to spot when looking downstream and, in my experience, casting to trout lying in lip currents at the tail of a run where the water spills over into the next run, was often easier when fishing downstream.

In the link below, Harry Murray says that casting to trout in lip currents is easy. That was not my experience when fishing upstream. To prevent the fly from dragging immediately it hits the water, you have to keep the leader off the water by high sticking which exposes you to the trout.

<http://www.murraysflyshop.com/reading-the-feeding-stations-on-a-mountain-trout-stream/>

Years ago I started wearing neoprene knee pads which are used by perlemoen divers and I found that they encouraged me to cast from a kneeling position which substantially lowered my profile, an essential when casting downstream.



The author fishing the upper Bokspruit at Gateshead farm near Rhodes

Try the rubber-tailed Vertical Emerger. If I was restricted to one fly for small streams this would be it. It has movement, contrast and vulnerability aplenty.

It is not a fly so much as a fishing system. You can choose a grizzly rooster hackle for increased buoyancy or a partridge or hen hackle for movement. Use a natural fur thorax behind the feather to absorb floatant. Better still, cut up some CDC feathers to produce dubbing. Then, soak it in Watershed (available from Frontier Fly Fishing in Johannesburg) and leave it on the window sill until dry. It is not so much the natural oil which causes CDC to be so buoyant but the structure of the feather – tiny hooks on the barbules which trap sparkling bubbles that mimic the bubbles that adhere to aquatic insects.

For further information on this read Ralph Cutter's informative book, *Fish Food* and watch his fascinating video, *Bugs of the Underworld*.
