

## On creating a fly pack

By Ian Cox



If you are anything like me, your fly tying divides into two parts, tying to fish and tying for the lekker of it. The product of the former which makes up the bulk of my tying finds its way into my fly boxes and the latter into an increasing collection of plastic storage boxes.

The former has utility but the latter has very little other than the pleasure that one derives from it and perhaps the lessons that are learnt from tying something new. Most of my tying is focused on the former but if I look at my fly tying material, I have invested very considerably in the latter.

This was brought home to me over Christmas when a bout of clearing out the garage became infectious and prompted me to tidy up my fly tying materials. I found that my failure to do so for some years had resulted in the deterioration of some material to the point of having to throw it away. Worse still bugs were beginning to get in necessitating urgent counter measures. (See: [On preserving materials](#))

I also found that the vast bulk of what is now a large investment in fly tying materials had nothing to do with what I actually fished with. Tom Sutcliffe ran an interesting series on

various fly fishers top six small stream flies. It got me thinking what flies do I use by and large when fishing fresh water and salt?

I am a neophyte dilutant salt water fly fisher so did not get beyond five , all targeting inshore fish like wave garrick, moonies and shad so the less said about them, the better. However I came up with 20 fresh water flies that I use more often than not. I use 40% of them predominantly on still waters and 60% on rivers. 70% are wet flies (100% in the case of Stillwater and 50% in the case of rivers) and 30% are dry which I suppose is normal for someone who fishes largely KZN waters.

Now I think we have all had the experience of sitting down to tie a batch of flies, only to spend the first half hour or so searching through ones materials for the right fly. It's a drag, right? Tom Sutcliffe has suggested that we store all the materials we need to tie a particular fly in a bag. I have followed his advice and have consequently owned a ZAK pack for years. But the truth is if you create a pack for a particular fly and then multiply it by say twenty, you find yourself duplicating materials which can get expensive. So what happens if thought if you created a pack for your top 20 flies? And that is what I did during a couple of days over Christmas.



Now creating that list is easier said than done. You start with the flies, then you move onto the recipes for each fly and from that you compile a materials list. You can access that list by clicking [here](#).

What I found interesting is how little (relatively speaking one requires in the way of materials to tie these flies. Indeed I was able to condense all the materials required into a small pack that would fit easily along with tools in the J Vice carry bag.

The other interesting thing is how much of a cape (which can cost well over R1 000.00 rand today is wasted). I estimate that if I use 20% of a cape to tie flies I actually fish with it is a lot.

I also found that for all the blather about hooks, I actually use very few types of the vast collection of hooks I do own. For the most part that selection is determined by gape, keep it wide (it must be easy to get a bead onto it) and shank length (for the most part keep it short).

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