

Terry Andrew's big fish and dragons

by

Ian Cox



Terry Andrews' office is an interesting place. Apart from the framed memorabilia about the early days of Blaikie Johnstone there is always an interesting bit wood lying around, not to mention the latest fly tying samples sent to him courtesy of his massively successful, Trout Talk, and other Facebook pages.

But what impresses me the most are the pictures of Terry holding monster trout and the fact that he seems to catch them more often than most. (He tells me that he has caught 3 double digit trout this year.) Terry is a still water specialist and big fish are his thing. This and his views on catching big fish are worth paying attention to.

His recipe for success is remarkably old fashioned. Concentrate on dams known to hold trophy fish and remember the East Griqualand farmers' motto, "Big flies equal big fish". (Terry tells me this is culled from the sayings of the local padre, Jimmy Little, who said "Big flies equal big fish equals big happiness". Sadly they don't make priests like that anymore.)

It is not surprising therefore, that Terry hunts most of his trophy trout on East Griqualand waters.

His go to fly is his HD Dragon. This fly accounts for two of those double digit fish. The other fell for a GHRE.

Terry's HD Dragon is a monster fly. He tells me it is based on Randall Kaufman's [Lake Dragon](#) but is much bigger and is also unweighted. Tied in its largest iteration it is nearly 8cm long. This is when it is tied on a Mustad size 2 R75-795080 2hx/5XL Streamer hook). He ties ties the fly on a size 4 and 6 hook.



Kaufman's lake dragon

He ties it using plastic bead chain eyes. Like Herman Botes, the inventor of the [Papa Roach](#), he eschews metal eyes because they disturb the neutral buoyancy of the fly and thus the way it moves. He stresses that this fly must swim level. It must not jig up and down as the metal bead headed flies are apt to do.



Tom Sutcliffe's photo of Herman Botes Papa Roach

Also like Herman Botes he uses Ice Dub but unlike Herman who prescribes olive Ice Dub for the abdomen and Terry uses the much brighter caddis green Ice Dub. Loud and large aptly describes Terry's fly. When I pointed out that most dragon fly patterns were less blingy he replied that you had to look at the fly it was imitating.



The natural captured, photographed and measured by Terry Andrews at 81mm

What the hell is that I asked? "I do not know" said Terry "but it local so Wolf Avni should know". Wolf for those who have not met him is the fishmeister who owns [Giants Cup](#). He is also an author naturalist and photographer of considerable ability.

Wolf came back saying that it was definitely an emperor dragon nymph in its final nymph stage and thus about five years old. He said it is probably a blue Anax Imperator but given its size maybe an orange Vagrant Emperor that had strayed outside its normal distribution range. He is unsure because at 81mm it is a little on the large side to be a blue.



Peter Brig takes a selfie of him making friends with a blue emperor

“And the colour?”, I asked. “That”, he said, “is a result of habitat rather than any characteristic specific to the species”. So this dragon is bright green because those are its surrounds just like the dragon pictured below is brown because that is the colour of the rocky cape streams it lives in.



Dragonfly nymph photographed by Tom Sutcliffe

This, says Wolf, is why he ties his Dragons using a mix of different coloured dubbing to create a mottled effect. He says trout do not see colour like we do and will key in if the right colour is there even if not in abundance see --- for more on his theories on the subject.

Now I cannot recall too many dams with lime green weeds growing in them so I asked Terry how many dams he fished to get these double digit fish. "Just one", he replied and before you ask, he is not telling which one. "Hmm" I thought.

"Aha" thought I this is a dam specific colour which maybe needs some tweaking as Wolf suggested thus making it more generally applicable. That was until I spoke to Wayne Stegen on the subject of colour. Funny thing, he said "but lime green is the colour of weed we are pulling up from the depths from a lot of dams even this deep into winter. Wayne fishes more than most so his observations are worth noting.



Terry's HD Dragon as tied by him.

Ian Cox variation

I have never been good at following instructions so I was already changing the fly by my second attempt at tying it.

I was encouraged in this heresy by what is now a fairly long love affair with Roger Baert's Hover Dragon. I was introduced to this fly by Russel Scorer and his brother in law Mike Lello who have used a variation (the Lello's Scorer – I call it) it to deadly effect on the high dams of Impendle. They in turn were taught the pattern by Roger Baert himself who, many years ago, was a near neighbour and fly tying companion of Russel Scorer.

The trick with dragons both Russel and Mike tell me is to get the profile right and that means tying them wide and flat. The stress Dragon bodies are not fat tapered tubes Dragons are wide when viewed from on top but they are much slender when viewed laterally. It is important to get this right in the tying.



Roger Baert did this using a shoe stiffening material as a form. He was in that industry and had easy access to the stuff. I have found it impossible to find. However it is possible to build up a form by tying nylon and wool along the

side of the shank of the hook building up as you go. I must say the results are far more pleasing as it avoids the exaggerated thinness of the lateral profile of Roger Baert's hover dragon.



Ian Cox variation

But as Terry points out, the Blue Emperor dragon does not have this profile. His more tube like profile is close to what the natural looks like than my variation.

Eish!

Fishing dragons

An important note to remember is that a dragon fly swims in short bursts by propelling water out of its anus. The retrieve is thus slow characterised by a short jerk of 3 or 4 cm followed by a wait and then another short jerk.

It takes ages to get your line in.

The trouble with a lot of KZN fishermen, Alan Hobson told me, is that we tend to fish all patterns like they were minnows running for their lives. This works more or less in the minnow rich waters of KZN where a fast stripped dragon can be mistaken for a chubby headed barb but is less successful where minnows are not so prolific.



Chubby head barb photographed by Terry Andrews and its imitation

Wolf Avni said much the same thing to me after watching my any pattern as long as it can swim like a fish style of fishing. He said "Ian, you will catch a lot of fish but none of them will be very big. Big fish are not that stupid!"

Terry would agree. He fishes his HD dragon using a very slow retrieve.

For more on dragons see below

<http://www.linecasters.co.za/news/sa-dragonfly-nymph.htm>

<http://www.tomsutcliffe.co.za/fly-fishing/fly-tying/item/208-tying-the-nd-dragonfly-nymph.html>

<http://www.tomsutcliffe.co.za/fly-fishing/fly-tying/item/256-herman-botes-papa-roach.html>

http://www.durbanflytyers.co.za/Articles/Salmo_Taddy_Black.pdf

Click [here](#) for my September 2013 articke on Damsels and Dragons