

Fly of the Month

The Parachute Black Spinner



Hook : Kamasan B 170 or similar
Thread : Black Unithread 6/0 or similar
Tail : 3 to 5 black micro fibbets
Body : Mix of UV Black Ice dubbing and black Scintilla
Post : Pink/white Float Vis
Hackle : Black dry fly hackle

Alan asked me to go through the process of tying this fly that I've had success with this season. When I started thinking about it, I realised the process came to involve a bit more than I had considered before. So please indulge me a little as I unpack it all.

I've always preferred to tie my dry flies in the "parachute" style. The person who taught me the basics of tying tied his that way, so I didn't see a reason to change. I tried tying traditional hackled flies, they were easier, but I was constantly unhappy with how they sat in the water and their perceived durability. Perhaps they weren't that easy to tie after all. It was also probably a reflection of my casting ability, but with most elements of fly fishing, if a situation resulted in a lack of confidence, the outcomes were also diminished. So I tied parachute hackle dry flies.

Initially, I tied Adams variants. Basically, grey dubbed bodies with brown tails and hackle. The posts started white and then changed to pink as my eyesight failed to keep up with my casting length and the varying stream types. Faster flowing runs with high levels of nutrient rich, foam concentrations (bubble lines) resulted in a bit of guess work with fish taking a fly or a natural. I reluctantly tied on anything else. Then, as I learned more about the feeding habits of trout and came across more and more finicky eaters, I tried different flies. Royal wulffs, Fastwater Duns, shaving brushes and stimulators. I realised that size had a bearing with some fish and so I stopped just carrying size 12's of a pattern, but everything between #10 to #16's.

The final, to this point, evolutionary stage of the black spinner came by chance. So typically Darwinian. I had some Black UV Ice Dubbing scraps on my tying desk. Rather than clean it up, it stayed there and got caught up in some of the black Scintilla dubbing I was tying with. It didn't look terrible, so I finished the fly and put it in my box ready for the next trip. Well that trip was terrible, almost. A favourite stretch on the Liffey resulted in no connections at all and I had started finding tree branches again. Fish with confidence and you fish well. Little confidence and, well, y'know.....

I finally saw a fish track under my fly, an Adams, and not commit. I tied on a nymph and still nothing. I changed the nymph. Nada. I popped on a Royal Wulff. This time it didn't even glance at it. I then noticed the black spinner and tried it. Solo. No nymph. No hesitation from the little guy and I was on. The next pool, another success. Now granted, it might not have just been the fly, but I tied a few more that week and my next sortie ended with that fly bringing the only success. A third trip, the same. Last week, I fished another stretch with a friend. He landed 5, all on a nymph. I only landed 3, but every take was to the dry. This mixed dub, black spinner.

Again, I realise there are many variables and I've cast to fish that haven't taken to it. But there's no fun in that side of the story. My suspicion is that the UV element in the dubbing acts as an attracting agent to the fish. I need to research this a bit more. In the field. Or stream.

So, to the tying instructions.

I use a Kamasan B170 in sizes 16 to 10. I wind on black 6/0 Uni thread 1/3 the length of length of the hook shaft.

For hooks 10 to 14 I loop a section of pink and a section of white Float Vis post material around the shaft, doubling it over. I also use other combinations such as orange and pink, white and orange and chartreuse and white for different visibility situations on the water. I'm also toying with the idea of different post combinations to identify different hook sizes, but I need a better memory for this to work effectively. For hook sizes 16 or smaller, I just use a single section of post material.

Holding the post above the hook, I lock it down with a couple of figure 8 wraps and then wind the thread up the post. This can take bit of coordination and it's important to keep the tension on the thread or it will easily unwrap. After 5 or 6 upward wraps (3 or 4 for smaller hook sizes), I come back down the post and lock the post in place with a couple more figure 8's, finishing on the hook side of the post. These up and down wraps provide the base for winding the hackle around the post later, creating the parachute.

Continue wrapping to the bend in the hook and tie in some tail material. Proportionally, the tail after the bend, should be the same length as the shank of the hook.

Bring the thread back to the bend and dub in a tiny pinch of black UV Ice Dubbing mixed with a tiny pinch of black Scintilla or Antron or Seal's fur, whatever dubbing material you would normally use. Don't over dub. The dubbing noodle should also start small where it wraps around the tail, gradually increasing towards the eye of the hook, creating a conical shaped body. Using too much dub, changes the proportion of the fly, reducing effectiveness, doesn't stay in place, reducing durability and looks odd, reducing the appeal and the likelihood you choosing it over all the other flies in your box.

Wind the dubbing on as described until you get to the post, creating the conical body. At the post, figure 8 wrap the dubbing around the post to hide the post material under the hook and stop part way between the post and the eye of the hook.

Keep up the thread tension at all times, while dubbing. You may even need to twist the dubbing a couple of times if it comes away from the thread while you wrap.

Take a hackle feather, suitable to the hook size. To check this, brush the feather so the fibres come out from the stem. Hold it next to the hook. Proportionally the length of the fibres should be the same length as the gap between the hook shank and the point of the hook. A little longer is ok. Too short and your fly will tend to lie sideways on the water.

Strip a few barbs off each side of the feather, exposing the stem. Tie in the hackle with the shiny side of the feather facing the hook. Bring the exposed stem behind the post and then around it at the top of where your upward thread wraps stopped. Complete a full wrap of the post. Each subsequent wrap should be directly below the last one. You may need to hold the post upright with your free hand, but keep the hackle wraps tight. They add support to the post when in the water and after the first, second and third fish have crunched it. No guarantees after that.

When there is no more space for hackle, 3 or 4 wraps, bring the hackle you are holding in front of the post and then angle it towards the tail. Bring the thread over the top of the hackle to hold it in place. You will need to wiggle the thread through the hackle wraps so you don't trap any fibres under the thread, reducing floatability. Do this twice to be sure, trim the excess hackle, then whip finish or tie off the thread how you normally do just behind the eye.

That's it. Do another 5. Disregard the first 3, you can reuse the hooks later and put the last 3 in your box. Trust me.

Rick Kream's FlyLife article on buoyancy is worth reading about the different observations regarding hackle types. It is in Issue 91 of Flylife or online here <https://flylife.com.au/featured-articles/beautiful-lies> I also refined my tying techniques from the Spring 2017 issue of Fly Tyer magazine, an American publication, from an article titled Creating Improved Parachute Dries.

Stephen Hill

