

Several years ago, while sorting out trout flies as part of a pre-season ritual, I ended up with a large box filled with old Catskill dries. It was a very nice assortment of flies and covered most of the major hatches on my home waters. When organized, it looked very professional and effective. That box made it back into to my vest and has a dedicated pocket that I seldom, if ever, visit. So why do I hold these flies in such low regard? Well, as nice as they are to look at, the Catskill dry simply isn't that effective when dealing with tough fish and has been replaced by several, far more useful patterns, all of which are easy to tie and simply *look* better to trout.

Here is why: the Catskill dry has three points of contact while on the water, the tail, the bottom of the hook and the tip of the hackles. Simply put, from a trout's perspective, it really looks nothing like a mayfly.

Although the fly on the right is not a parachute, it does display the quality of the "low riding" flies common to parachutes and no hackle flies.



A Time for Change

Back in the 70's, innovative tiers like Fran Betters, Al Caucci and Bob Nastasi figured that out and went on to design patterns like the haystack, compara dun and the usual. These three patterns helped pave the road for other low riding dries that actually look like mayflies to the fish. However, the concept of *low riding* flies came to the mainstream about 40 years earlier when a Detroit angler commissioned a lady by the name of Helen Todd of Glasgow, Scotland to tie an assortment of flies to his specifications. It would seem that the first parachute flies came from this.

Parachutes have been a favorite of mine since the early 90's when a friend and colleague, Barney Jones explained to me the merits of this style. For the first few years, I have to admit that I bought the majority of parachutes that I used as I had a difficult time putting them together at the vice. I tried several different methods but always had a hard time finishing the fly to my standards. It wasn't until I was introduced to the Klinkhamer Special shortly thereafter that I learned a sure fire and easy approach to parachutes.

The flies, as you see them here are tied in the method, as I interpreted it, from Hans van Klinken, the originator of the Klinkhamer Special and it seems to be the most efficient method of tying any parachutes. If you are a dry fly enthusiast and haven't spent time with parachutes, give them a go as I am certain, this change in approach will lead to greater success.

The Klinkhamer Special

Hook: Partridge, Klinkhamer Extreme (15BNX)
Thread: Uni 17/0 or Griffiths sheer
Body: Hairline dubbing, Antron, Marabou (Optional - See RH Caddis)
Rib: Small Uni-french oval
Thorax: Peacock herl
Post: Antron, Poly wing, calf tail (Optional)
Hackle: Select saddle (Suggestions - Whiting or Hoffman select)

Step 1

Begin by laying down a base layer on the flat portion of the hook and then return the thread to $\frac{1}{3}$ rd the length of the flat portion. Secure the post on the top of the flat portion and make even wraps back, toward the turn. Stop just after the hook bends and cut the excess material on a taper to maintain the overall taper of the body.



Step 2

Cover the remainder of the hook to the end of the hook turn and return the thread to the post. Form the post by advancing the thread up the post and back down to the base. Be sure that the thread is tight and edge to edge. Any breaks in the thread will compromise the integrity of the post. Put a small amount of head cement on the post and then return the thread to the back.

Step 3

Bare the ends off of a piece of ribbing and secure it in place. Dub the thread and form the body, finishing it at the flat portion. Rib the body and secure.



Step 4

Secure in one or two pieces of peacock herl. (One for 20 to 16, two for 14 to 10) and advance it forward, straddling the post and finishing off just behind the eye. Whip finish and cement.



Step 5

Take the fly out and turn it 90° so the post is horizontal. This is a more natural tying surface and will help in finishing the hackle.



Step 6

Prepare a hackle by stripping off ¼" of barbs at the base. Re-secure your thread to the post as if you were starting a new fly and return the thread to the base of the post. With your opposite hand, pinch the bared quill of the hackle at the post, with the hackle running along the post and secure the hackle with your tying thread. Advance the thread to the end of the post and then return the thread to the base. (At the bottom of each turn, while securing the hackle, support the post with your opposite thumb and forefinger and pull down on the thread to lock in the hackle.)



Step 7

Turn the hackle on the post toward the base of the post. (If the feather starts to turn with the natural curve of the individual hackles turning down, simply back it off and turn the feather in the opposite direction. You want the hackle to be curving up, not down.) Stop the hackle at the base of the post and secure it with your tying thread.



Step 8

Whip finish the hackle to the base of the post, just like you would a regular head but negotiate the hackle fibers while turning the whip finisher. Cement the base and return the hook to the natural position in the vise. Cut off the remaining post, leaving approximately $\frac{1}{8}$ of an inch exposed and then put a small dab of head cement on the base, allowing it to absorb into the base and the hackle.



Tip of the month:

Making posts for parachutes requires a “touch”. You have to keep the thread tight enough on the material without causing the post to flop over and lose your wraps. My advise is to support the post with your thumb and for finger on your opposite hand and pull each wrap tight while your bobbin is opposite your left hand.(for a right hander) Then, to start the next wrap, just maintain contact with the thread to the post until you can grab it again for the next wrap.

The second part of this tip is; develop your touch through practice. Tie a dozen posts on hooks to the end of step 2, in a row. By doing this repetitively, you will get a feel for the “touch” that I am talking about.