

I was in Argentina recently and while there, I had the idea to try some of our North American patterns on trout south of the equator. I had no reason to suspect that they wouldn't work but it was an itch that I had to scratch so I got with one of the guides and went over some of the patterns in my boxes that they had not seen. I was surprised with the results, as there were a number of patterns, foreign to him that I had assumed had gone main stream. Among the top of that list was Fran Betters, "Usual". That conversation got me thinking about my assumption and the idea that there are perhaps many that are unfamiliar with this pattern. So for those that are, here you go.

The Usual came to be, as many patterns do; by accident. Had a friend of Fran's not dropped off several hares feet a few weeks before, the Usual might not have happened. What a shame that would have been. As the story goes, Fran had those hare's feet sitting on his tying bench when one afternoon he got to inspecting them. The feet were that of the Varying hare or Snowshoe hare and Fran recalled how these guys spent a lot of time walking around on deep snow. So long as they weren't being chased by beagles or shot at, they made out pretty well during the long, eastern winters. He made the assumption that the feet had a water repelling quality and figured that it could make for good dry fly material. That is what sets the great tiers of the world apart from the rest of us. They have an understanding for materials that exceeds most and can recognize where it can fit in a fly or make better an existing pattern.

Anyway, Fran put together a pattern, using the longer tips for the tail and the wing and the under fur for body dubbing.

He then threw them unceremoniously to the corner of his desk. It wasn't until his friend Bill Phillips walked into the shop one afternoon and spied the flies sitting on Fran's bench.

"What are those?" asked Bill. Fran explained to him the rabbit story, but Bill wasn't listening, instead, he walked over to the bench, picked up an empty container and scooped the flies into it. "I'll let you know". Bill recognized the qualities in the fly and fished it hard, making sure that it had a chance and

to his delight, it performed brilliantly. Not only did it catch fish but it met the criteria for the perfect pattern (in Bill's estimation); it can be fished wet or dry, as an emerger or dun and is easy as heck to tie.

To most, upon first viewing this pattern, it looks amaturistic at best but don't let it fool you. The Usual is a work horse and has evolved as an essential pattern, lending the style to dozens of offspring. With properly died hares feet, we have the ability to tie the Usual to represent just about any mayfly that floats on the water.



The Usual

Hook: Any dry fly hook (I like Kamasan B402)
Thread: Red (the original pattern called for red but the hare's under fur will take on any color that you use)
Tail: Hare's feet hair (the longer, straighter hairs)
Body: Under fur taken from tail and wing hairs
Wing: Larger clump of hare's feet hair

Step 1:

Secure you're tying thread behind the eye and lay down an underbody to just ahead of the bend. Cut off a small clump of the hares feet hair, pull out the under fur and lay that aside (the under fur, as it will be used for the body). Secure the hairs on top of the hook to form the tail.



Step 2:

Cut off a larger clump (about twice as much) of the hare's feet hair, pull out the under fur and set it (the under fur) aside. Secure the hair to the top of the hook and wrap forward, leaving enough space to dub the body in front of the wing. (see image 3 for proportions) Form a few wraps in front of the wing to stand it up slightly and then return the thread to the tail.



Step 3:

Dub the under fur onto the thread. (Be careful not to over dub) and wrap it forward to the space ahead of the wing. Form a head, whip finish and cement.

In memory of Fran Betters, 1931-2009

