TRICO COMPARA-DUN (HOT SPOT)

By Al & Gretchen Beatty

When Ken Davis, aquatic biologist with Wildlife Survey & Photo Service in Sacramento, California (author of *Biology on the Fly*, page 40), contacted us via email to develop a female trico adult pattern based on his observations, we immediately knew which pattern in our bag of tricks to bring to the fore – a female trico with a hot spot near the end of the shank.

We tie and fish many of our dry flies with a hot spot incorporated into their construction. Longtime friend Gary LaFontaine believed in the importance of a hot spot on a dry fly or eyes on a sub-surface pattern. He advocated a hot spot/eyes provided a "trigger" that provoked a fish to strike. We never really knew why patterns tied with a trigger mechanism incorporated into their design worked so well. We just accepted his observations of fish behavior collected on his many scuba diving studies.

We're not going to try to steal Ken Davis' thunder in this column trying to explain his beliefs. But Davis' observation of trico adults caught in spider webs provides an explanation from a scientific perspective as to why the LaFontaine hot spot seems to improve a fly pattern's attraction. Just spend a few worthwhile minutes investigating his article and the information within. Our purpose here is to provide fly-tying information, and the Compara-dun is a pattern that causes some flytiers problems.

Have you ever tied a Compara-dun with the fanned wings standing up perfectly straight only to find those same wings tilted forward when you go to use the fly several days after it jumped from the vise into the fly box? If this problem has plagued your Compara-duns (and other hair wing flies) then read on. If you don't have that problem then just go to Ken's piece on page 40.

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MATERIALS

Hook: Size 18 to 24, standard dry fly
Thread: Black
Egg Sack: Green dubbing or floss
Tail: Moose body hair or Micro Fibetts
Abdomen: Green dubbing or biot
Wing: Deer hair, fanned
Thorax: Peacock herl
Head: Thread

Place a hook in the vise and lay down a thread base from the one-fourth position to the end of the shank and back one half way. Tie on one tail fiber so it is as long as the hook shank. Apply an egg sac at the end of the shank using green dubbing. Tie on the last two tail fibers using the egg sac to separate them. Trim any waste ends. Leave the thread hanging at the one-fourth position on the shank.

Select, clean and stack a clump of deer body hair. Tie the fibers to the hook with the tips pointing forward. Adjust their length so they equal the hook shank. Trim the waste ends at a severe angle so they blend well with future abdomen. Cover wrap over those ends to shape a tapered underbody.

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Mentally divide the clump of wing hair into three bundles. Pull up the first and place a turn of thread between it and the other two bundles.

Pull up the next bundle of hair, place a turn of thread between it and the remaining fibers. Pull up the remaining hair fibers and place several turns of thread in front of them to force the last bunch of hair to stand up straight (4A). If you try to stand all of the wing fibers up at the same time they usually will tilt forward within a few days of leaving the vise. If on the other hand you attack the bundle a few fibers at a time they will remain upright for the life of the fly or until it is lost to a streamside bush or tree like most of Al's are. (Our thanks to Hole In The Wall Fly Shop owner Britt Phillips for this neat trick.) At this point many flytiers fan out the wing fibers. This is the wrong time to do so; we'll perform that task later.

Apply dubbing to the thread and construct a slender abdomen on the back of the hook. Attach several peacock herls and wrap a thorax on both sides of the wing clump. Tie off, whip-finish, and trim the thread from the hook. Apply a coating of head cement to seal the whip-finish.

Now is the time to fan out the wing fibers. It is much easier at this time because you don't have to dodge those pesky fibers that keep trying to get in your way if you had fanned them in Step 4.