

Parachute Nymphs

Transfer this proven dry-fly tying method to your nymph patterns.

PARACHUTE DRY FLIES ARE among the most popular flies today for good reason. They float well and are easy to see, and the 360-degree hackle mimics the leg profile of a natural insect. So why not use a parachute hackle to simulate nymph legs? The idea is so simple I can't believe that I didn't think of it sooner. I couldn't find a reference on parachute nymphs, but someone else has surely tried this.

The basic idea for the para-nymphs came when I was tying my Split Top Emergers (*American Angler* January/February 2014). The hackle around the base of the wingcase looked right, and it was anatomically correct. In turn, the

basic format for this hackle style came from some of the parachute damsel adult patterns. Ned Long's Pull Overs and Bob Quigley's Hackle Stacker were other catalysts for this design. Initial winter testing on the Snake proved them palatable.

Right Side Up

Besides the anatomically correct leg profile, the hackle legs help position the fly in an upright position in the water column, just as they do with a dry fly. This works best on flies that are tied unweighted as submergers or where a lead-wire underbody is used. Natural bend hooks will aid the upright position by acting as ballast under the hackle. This

works best in moderate currents, and is very effective prior or early in the hatch.

The genetic breeding of small hackle is what has made this style of fly possible. You can now find genetic hen neck hackle down to size 18, and the stems are thin and flexible which makes them easy to wrap. Some of the saddles will also work. Whiting is the most common brand of genetic hen hackle and sells them in their Whiting, Brahma, American, and Coq de Leon series. A wide range of mottling and natural and dyed colors are sold. As with any hackle, selecting them yourself or having them selected by a trusted fly shop will ensure they are the desired size. You might also find suitable hackle if you look through a number of

The traditional parachute style of tying dry flies can be translated to nymphs any number of ways.



imported hen hackles. Hen hackle has softer fibers than rooster hackle and will provide more motion in a dead-drifted fly.

Another possibility is genetic rooster hackle. If profile is more important to you than motion, rooster dry fly hackle works fine. However, there are a couple of untapped sources of rooster soft hackle. The first is the schlappen section of a rooster saddle. Many saddles have a bunch of good schlappen soft hackle. This will be at the bottom of the saddle. The tips of some of this genetic schlappen can be as small as a size 20. The other source is the webby stuff at the base of a genetic rooster neck or saddle hackle. This is the stuff you usually throw away, and is located above the marabou like fluff at the base of the feather. Also, there is nothing saying that you can't wrap the fluff for an animated fly. Ostrich herl tied as hackle can also work great on small flies.

Finding a Post

My first parachute nymphs were tied with a glass bead for a post. I first saw this style post when the glass bead craze hit the tying scene. This can also be done with a plastic bead. The shiny bead might imitate an air bubble on a nymph or emerger or possibly an opening wingcase. The post is pretty easy to create and the bulge of the bead holds the hackle down. To form the post, I thread a couple of wraps through the hole in the bead and then secure the wire with thread. I use the leftover wire from the abdomen rib. Don't pull the bead all the way tight to the hook shank, as you will need a little room to wrap the hackle and dub a thorax. This post can be tied with no additional weight or with a glass or metal beadhead.

My favorite wing case/parachute post is Mylar braid. Diamond Braid, Sparkle Flash, or Holographic have been around for years and are generally used as baitfish or saltwater fly bodies. They can be found in any number of metallic or pearlescent colors. They are slightly oval in cross section, and the stretchable nature of the Mylar is very conformable. There are now many flat Mylar braids available, and these are my first choice for wing cases. Flat Diamond Braid, Axxel Flash, Flat Braid, and Kreinik Braid are



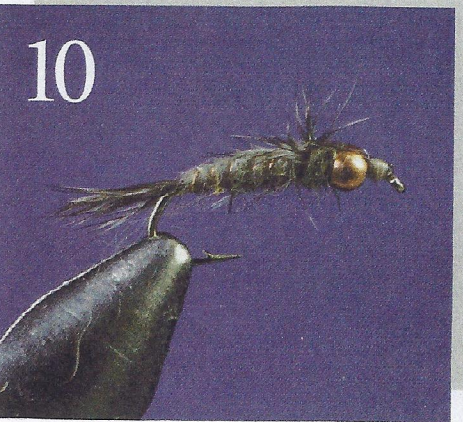
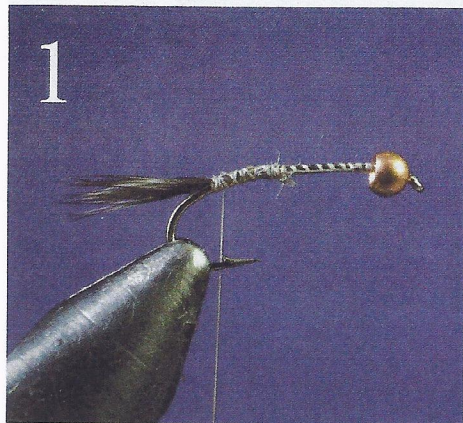
Genetic rooster schlappen (left) or genetic hen hackle (right) work well on small parachute nymphs.



A glass-bead post can be created by threading your ribbing wire through the center of the bead.



Think outside the box. Oval (left) or flat (right) Mylar braids make excellent wingases.



Parachute Hare and Copper nymph

HOOK: Dai-Riki 280 2XL natural bend hook sizes 10 through 18.

THREAD: Tan 8/0.

BEAD: Copper bead to match size.

TAIL: Grizzly soft hackle fibers.

RIB: Fine copper wire.

ABDOMEN: Hare's Ear Dubbing

WINGCASE: Pearl Mylar braid dyed dark olive (Peacock).

HACKLE: Genetic grizzly hen soft hackle, genetic rooster schlappen or the soft fibered section at the base of grizzly rooster saddle hackle.

THORAX: Hare's Ear Dubbing and copper bead.

- 1 Slide the bead onto the hook shank. Attach your thread to the hook shank and tie in the tail.
- 2 Tie on copper wire for the rib. Dub the abdomen on the rear half of the hook shank.
- 3 Rib the abdomen with the copper wire and secure.
- 4 Tie in a strand of Mylar braid.
- 5 Secure the tip of a straight pin or needle to the side of the hook shank with figure-eight wraps next to the Mylar braid.
- 6 Tie the hackle on and wrap around the needle and Mylar Braid.
- 7 Carefully tie off the hackle with thread. You will have to weave with your bobbin tip to prevent trapping hackle fibers. Pull out the needle.
- 8 Dub a short thorax behind the bead. The bead will form the front of the thorax. Make sure there will be a little space behind the hook eye when you push the bead back as the wingcase will go over the dubbing and bead and be tied off in front of the bead.
- 9 Pull your tying thread over the top of the bead and make a few wraps to anchor it. A little thumbnail coaxing will get you more room if needed.
- 10 Pull the Mylar braid over the thorax and secure in front of the bead. Cut off and whip finish.
- 11 Coat the thread head with cyanoacrylate glue as the short tie-in point makes it hard to secure with only thread. Fluff up the hackle so the hackle fibers radiate 360 degrees.
- 12 Coat the Mylar with UV adhesive and cook with a UV light. Epoxy or an air dry coating like Loon Hard Head will also work.


common brands of flat Mylar braid. With these options you can tie natural or bright wingcases very easily.

Cheating on a Post

The Mylar wingcase is tied in at the rear of the thorax, and you wrap the hackle around the base of it. As with any parachute post you will need either stiffness or resistance to wrap a secure hackle. Some tyers may own a gallows or parachute tool, which can be clipped to the wing to hold it tight. Most people don't have one, and I probably wouldn't go buy one. A simple cheater to create a firm post is to lightly secure the tip of a straight pin or needle to the side of the hook shank with figure eight thread wraps. You now have a rigid post. After the hackle is wrapped and tied off, you can pull out the needle. Way too easy. You can even use pheasant tail for post and this will also work in many other parachute situations. With short hackles like hen neck, a rotating hackle plier will make it a lot easier to hold and wrap.

Once the hackle is wrapped and secured, you can dub a thorax and pull over the wingcase. This is pretty straightforward. I frequently use a bead as all or part of the thorax, as it looks anatomically more correct than a standard bead head. Thanks Andre Puyans for the tip. At this point, tie off the Mylar and whip finish. I like to use a drop of cyanoacrylate glue to secure the Mylar under the whip finish. On small flies, there isn't much room for many thread wraps, and reinforcement helps.

After tying off the fly, you might need to coax some of the hackle fibers forward as they have a tendency to get pulled back. A simple pull with a thumb and index finger will do the trick. You don't need to do this, but I like to coat the top of the wingcase with UV glue to give it depth. This will also secure the hackle. Epoxy or air dry coatings can also be used.

Parachute hackle makes great nymph legs. Why should dry flies have all the parachute fun? 

Scott is the fly shop manager at JD High Country outfitters in Jackson, Wyoming, and the author of Introduction to Saltwater Tying, A New Generation of Trout Flies, and The Never Ending Stream.