

# On The Fly

June 2004

"Fly tying is a school from which we never graduate"

## PATTERN OF THE MONTH: Haystack

Hook: Standard dry fly - size to match natural.  
Thread: 3/0 or 6/0 to match body.  
Tail: Small clump of deer hair to match natural.  
Wing: Larger clump of deer hair of the same color.  
Body: Dubbing to match color of deer hair.



### Tying Instructions:

- 1) Tie in a small clump of deer hair, one shank length, at the bend.
- 2) Tie in a larger clump of deer hair, four times as much as tail, at about two-thirds the distance up the shank. Tie in tightly and then wind thread in front of wing to hold hairs upright.
- 3) Apply dubbing to thread and wind on to form a tapered body to the base of the wing. Apply more dubbing and wind tightly in front of wing to help hold it upright. Form a small head and whip finish.

There are five patterns in the original Haystack series:

- 1) The Cream Haystack, using cream hair and dubbing, imitates green drake, cream variant, light Cahill, and pale morning dun.
- 2) The Dun Haystack, using blue dun hair and gray muskrat dubbing, imitates the Hendrickson, quill Gordon, blue dun, and blue-winged olive.
- 3) The Natural Haystack, using brownish gray hair and opossum dubbing, imitates the march brown, Adams, gray fox, etc.
- 4) The Dark Haystack, using dark hair and reddish brown dubbing, imitates *Isonychia bicolor* and any other dark colored fly.
- 5) The Ausable Haystack, using rusty orange hair and dubbing, imitates rusty spinners and rust colored caddis.

Haystack flies were developed over 50 years ago by Fran Betters when he was still in high school. These flies are genuine classics that consistently take trout in streams all over the world under all conditions, for all types of hatches, and when other fancy-tied flies fail. The Haystack is an all-purpose pattern that imitates a majority of insects that trout feed on. This pattern does not require expensive neck hackle, and tying can be learned quickly and easily. The Haystack is the perfect fly-tiers fly.

The original Haystack was tied on a size 10, Mustad 9671 hook and incorporated Key deer hair for the tail and wing and the body was dubbed with cream Australian opossum fur. Key deer are now a protected species so coastal deer hair is now used. After the development of the first Haystack, which imitated the green drake spinner, Fran developed a series of five patterns to imitate all of the important mayfly hatches. Twenty years later these patterns were copied and called Compara-duns.

It's amazing that the Haystack works so well and consistently when other classic patterns fail. The fact that these patterns actually imitate three different stages of the mayfly and other species is probably the biggest reason. It floats in the surface film with a perfect silhouette like the dun and becomes a good imitation of the fallen spinner. When tied in a few different body colors and different shades of wing, it will imitate all major mayfly hatches. When tied in its various color combinations, and in smaller sizes, it does an excellent job of imitating the majority of caddis emergers. When tied bushier and on larger hooks, it can successfully imitate the larger stoneflies. And, finally, you can tie the tail and wing sparse and fan the wing 90 degrees rather than 180 degrees. This creates a good imitation of an emerging nymph and allows the fly to sit lower in the film for a smaller silhouette.

Many anglers claim that the Haystack catches larger trout because it floats in the surface film and is more visible or more apt to catch the fish's attention. Because it creates a lower profile, it is also easier for the fish to capture. Another advantage is that the pattern is easier for the angler to see, a prerequisite for a good dry fly.

The potential for tying and fishing the Haystack is only limited by your observations and creativity." Fran Betters.  
Tie some up. Give them a test flight, and let me know how you do.

### TYING TIPS - Static

When you blend natural furs or the new synthetics using the electric mini-blenders, static electricity can cause hairs and fibers to cling to the sides and top of the blender container, especially in winter. You can eliminate this problem by wiping the inside of the container and lid with a fabric softener sheet. Even a used sheet works fine. When you are tying with deer, elk, squirrel or other fine hair, static electricity can also be a problem. A product called Static Guard, or something similar, can be purchased at most computer stores. Just spray it on the hair and the tying tools to stop the static that makes the hair cling to everything. It also makes stacking and clipping of animal hair neater and easier. Try it to stop the fly-away tendency of flashabou and crystal flash.