



Atlantic Salmon Fly Tying

from past to present

Without pretending to be an historian, I can state that the evolution of salmon flies has been known for over two hundred years. Over that time, and long before, many changes have come to the art of fly tying; the materials, tools, and techniques we use today are not what our predecessors used. In order to understand the modern art, a fly tier ought to know a bit of the evolution and history of line fishing, fly fishing, and the art of tying a fly.

Without going into too much detail, here is a brief overview of the evolution and the art of angling and fly tying. I will start by separating the evolution of fly tying into three categories: fly fishing, the Victorian era, and the contemporary era.

Historians claim that the first scriptures on flies were from Dame Juliana Berners's *Book of Saint Albans* (1486), which incorporated an earlier work, *A Treatise of Fishing with an Angle*. The Benedictine nun wrote on outdoor recreation, the origin of artificial flies, and fly-fishing equipment. This book was updated in 1496 with additional fishing techniques.

In the early 1500s, a Spanish author by the name of Fernando Basurto promoted fishing among sportsmen with his *Little Treatise on Fishing*; but the first masterpiece of English literature on fishing was *The Compleat Angler* by Izaak Walton and Charles Cotton, published in 1653. Walton was a passionate fisherman who wanted to promote fishing as an activity in communion with nature. Unlike modern books about fishing, Walton's did not specify equipment or techniques to use in particular fishing situations. Rather, he wanted each fisherman to learn in the field and not by reading a book. *The Compleat Angler* was meant to inspire people to experience the joys of fishing. Walton's book was presented as a dialogue between three individuals — a fisherman, a hunter, and a falconer — and explains the linkages between nature and mankind.

One of the first salmon flies to be given a name was the Horseleech, by James Chetham in his book, *The Angler's Vade Mecum*, in 1681. In this book, Chetham describes a wide variety of flies classified by target species, their application, seasons, and different types of water. He lists 195 different flies in total, a few of which are salmon flies. Chetham was also one of the first authors to detail the materials used to tie flies. Later, in 1746, Richard Bowlker, in *The Art of Angling*, named two new salmon flies, the Peacock Fly and the Dragon Fly. In the mid-1800s, a Scotsman named A.E. Knox published books and articles on Spey-type flies — so-named for the river Spey in northeast Scotland, along which he fished. Spey flies are characterized by the use of long body hackles and slim wings that hug the body of the fly. Bowlker explained fly fishing and was one of the first to speak about fly-tying materials, especially rooster feathers, which we now call hackle.

The first to have written specifically on salmon-fly tying was an Irishman by the name of William Blacker in the mid-1800s. Blacker is partly responsible for the Gaudy

fly style in Ireland and England. He also created a series of colourful Spirit flies. Blacker became popular so quickly that he opened a store and a fly-tying school. His first publication, *W. Blacker's Art of Angling, and Complete System of Fly Making, and Dying of Colours* (1842), is still widely used by salmon-fly tiers today, mostly for feather flies.

In the mid-1800s Victorian fly tiers like Major John Popkin Traherne invented increasingly colourful patterns. The talented and creative Traherne made a major contribution to salmon-fly tying. He was a creator and pioneer of the popular featherwing salmon flies, as well as a tier of classic and Victorian styles like the Nepenthian, the Evening Star, and the Chatterer. He also contributed to Henry Cholmondeley-Pennell's book entitled *Fishing*. His fly patterns were masterpieces. He created fantastic flies with the use of new materials such as feathers, hackles, dubbing, tinsel, and silk. Even today, his fly models are a great challenge for even the most experienced fly tier.

A London man by the name of George Mortimer Kelson came along in 1880. He was a very controversial figure in the world of fly fishing. Kelson was a self-promoting, flamboyant, and colourful character who exaggerated his talents at fly fishing and fly casting and took credit for others' salmon fly patterns. He became popular by publishing a series of new salmon flies in the *Fishing Gazette*, a British fishing newspaper launched in 1877. Kelson contributed many articles to the *Gazette* starting in 1884, including a description of eighteen amazing fly patterns designed by Major John Popkin Traherne. By the end of the 1800's he had published two books, *The Salmon Fly* and *Tips*, two of my favourites. At the start of the 1900s, Kelson published a series of very popular cards that depicted eighty-five beautiful classic Atlantic salmon flies.

In the mid-1800s new patterns of the popular featherwing fly appeared, such as the Childers, the Jock Scott, Mar Lodge, the Green Highlander and the Rory. Many of these were probably the designs of Trahern or Kelson, but we don't know for sure whose each pattern was.

In the early 1900s, Dr. T.E. Pryce-Tannatt's book *How to Dress Salmon Flies* and Francis Francis's *A Book on Angling* contributed to fly-tying techniques, tools usage, and tying materials. Pryce-Tannatt's approach was much more modern and the photographs in his book were clearer than previous books. He was also one of the first authors to advocate the use of substitute materials in place of rare or expensive ones.

It was in the twentieth century that the contemporary era of flies came, especially those tied with hair, including the popular Spey and Dee — mostly for fishing steelhead — shrimp, streamers, dry flies, tube flies, bugs, and bombers. The use of substitute materials in the tying of flies became more popular in the 1900s for several reasons. Several birds that supplied fly tiers became endangered. The cost for natural materials rose and the introduction of readily available and inexpensive synthetic materials meant fly tiers around the world could access the same materials.

In 1920, with the help of several renowned authors and anglers, George M. La Branche popularized salmon fly fishing on the Upsalquitch River in New Brunswick. His books, *The Dry Fly and Fast Water*, published in 1914, and *The Salmon and the Dry Fly* in 1924 helped to promote dry-fly fishing for Atlantic salmon.

Lee Wulff, an American passionate about salmon catch-and-release, presented his fly collection in his book *Lee Wulff on Flies* (1980), mostly oriented to dry-fly fishing. Wulff was renowned for his discovery of new places for Atlantic salmon fishing in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Since then, thousands of new salmon flies have been created and are now on the market. In North America, well-known fly designers include Theodore Gordon, Charles DeFeo, Bert Miner, Ira Gruber, John Cosseboom, Col. Esmond Drury, J. Clovis Arseneault, Elmer J. Smith, Rocky Schulstaad, Wallace Doak, Jerry Doak, Maurice Ingalls, Warren Duncan, Paul LeBlanc, Marc LeBlanc, Carmelle Bigaouette, and Ralph Billingsley.

Many authors have published books of reference on salmon fly tying. Some popular books are Stewart & Allen's series and others by John Veniard, Joseph D. Bates, Keith Fulsher and Charles Krom, Ken Sawada, Topher Browne, Paul Marriner, Poul Jorgenson, Yvon Gendron, Len Rich, and Mike Dawes.

This new book updates some of the most popular Atlantic salmon fly patterns used on the rivers of eastern Canada and Quebec. You will find many traditional patterns, still used by anglers today, but you will also find new flies that are very productive on our rivers. In this book, we decided to include the fly pattern descriptions and high-resolution photographs in order to inform fly tiers of as many flies as possible without going into the history of each one. It was impossible to feature all of the known salmon flies in one book. Marc A. LeBlanc and I made the first selection of flies for each of the four categories; however, each fly tier could add fly patterns that adapt well to certain regions or flies that do well in specific rivers. For some of the flies, where it was possible, we decided to add the name of the originator.

A few sponsors have helped and supported us in the planning of this book. The first sponsor and the one who encouraged me to go ahead with this project is Paul LeBlanc. He is the owner of Boutique Salmo Nature in Old Montreal, Quebec, and one of the fly tiers for this book. Paul's expertise in the fly-fishing world and his knowledge of Atlantic salmon flies make this book a high-quality reference manual. All the flies have been tied on hooks provided by Partridge of Redditch, and most of the flies in this book were tied using materials from UNI Products, an innovative manufacturer of fly-tying materials.

It goes without saying that a book of this size wouldn't be possible without the participation of experienced and distinguished fly tiers. The eight fly tiers who tied the 286 flies in this book are without a doubt well-distinguished and experienced tiers from different areas like Quebec, New Brunswick, the United States, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland and Labrador. You might find some differences in the fly descriptions compared to other books. These fly tiers, depending on their experiences and the rivers they fished, chose the most modern layouts, colours, materials, and personalized techniques. Many thanks to Paul LeBlanc, Bob MacDonald, Frank Walsh, Steve Silverio, Allen Kay, and to both Marc LeBlancs for sharing their talents and expertise and for benefiting the salmon fishing and fly tying communities.





Wet Flies

Modern North American hairwing Atlantic salmon flies were first devised in the middle of the 20th century. These flies, which are much easier to tie than classic featherwing British salmon flies, are now standard in our fly boxes today. However, some old classic patterns such as the Hairy Mary, the Jeannie, the Blue Charm, and the Silver Blue remain popular today.

Recent years have seen a tremendous growth in styles of salmon flies including modern shrimp flies and tube flies. As a result of recent innovations to synthetic materials, most new patterns include the addition of Krystal Flash, Flashabou, and similar materials.

The wet flies presented in this book comprise the most popular and successful patterns used today. Some patterns are new and others are classics.

All wet flies in this category are tied on Partridge Heavy Single M-2, size #2 hooks.

Les mouches noyées

L'arrivée des premières mouches à saumon à poils date du milieu du vingtième siècle. Ces modèles, beaucoup plus faciles à monter que les mouches exotiques à plumes, se retrouvent régulièrement dans les boîtes à mouches des pêcheurs. De vieux modèles comme la *Hairy Mary*, la *Jeannie*, la *Blue Charm* et la *Silver Blue* sont toujours populaires de nos jours.

L'ère moderne est marquée par l'augmentation de façon exponentielle du nombre de modèles de mouches à saumon et surtout de nouvelles catégories de mouches comme les *Shrimps* et les mouches tubes. Que dire des nouveaux matériels synthétiques que l'on retrouve sur le marché? En plus de la soie floche, de la laine, des plumes de cou et des poils naturels utilisés depuis longtemps, maintenant la majorité des nouveaux modèles sont montés avec du *Krystal Flash*, du *Flashabou* ou des lames colorées.

Les mouches noyées présentées ici correspondent aux principaux modèles de mouches à saumon à poils, anciens et nouveaux, que les pêcheurs d'aujourd'hui attachent à leur avançon et avec lesquelles ils ont le plus de succès.

Toutes les mouches noyées de cette catégorie ont été montées sur des hameçons de type Partridge *Heavy Single M-2*, de grandeur #2.



28/30

Tier | Monteur: Paul LeBlanc

Creator | Créateur: Paul LeBlanc

TAG: Fine silver wire

RIB: Fine silver wire

BODY: Black wool

WING: Black bear hair over light blue Krystal Flash

COLLAR HACKLE: Blue eared pheasant feather

CHEEKS: Jungle cock

HEAD: Black

FERRET : Fil métallique argenté

CÔTES : Fil métallique argenté

CORPS : Laine noire

AILES : Poils d'ours noir sur des brins de « Krystal Flash »
bleu pâle

COLLERETTE : Plume de hokki bleu

JOUES : Coq de Sonnerat

TÊTE : Noire



Abby Shrimp

Tier | Monteur: Marc A. LeBlanc

Creator | Créateur: Marc A. LeBlanc

TAG: Fine oval silver tinsel

TAIL: White polar bear with four strands of pearl Krystal
Flash

RIB: Oval silver tinsel

BODY: Rear half: fluorescent green floss; front half:
peacock herl

THROAT: Natural black squirrel tail extending to hook bend

WING: A few strands of fluorescent green Krystal Flash,
covered with natural black squirrel tail extending to
hook bend, covered with narrow sections of golden
pheasant tippets extending to hook barb

COLLAR HACKLE: Black

HEAD: Black

FERRET : Laminette ovale argentée fine

QUEUE : Poils d'ours polaire blancs avec quatre brins de
« Krystal Flash » perle

CÔTES : Laminette ovale argentée

CORPS : Arrière : soie floche vert fluorescent; avant : fibres
de paon

GORGE : Poils de queue d'écureuil noir rejoignant le bout
de l'hameçon

AILES : Brins de « Krystal Flash » vert fluorescent, suivis
de poils de queue d'écureuil noir s'étendant au bout de
l'hameçon et couverts de petites sections de tippets de
faisan doré de la même longueur que le poil d'écureuil

COLLERETTE : Noire

TÊTE : Noire



Abe Munn Killer

Tier | Monteur: Marc A. LeBlanc
 Creator | Créateur: Abe Munn

TAG: Fine oval gold tinsel

TAIL: Section of light brown mottled turkey wing

RIB: Oval gold tinsel

BODY: Yellow floss

THROAT: A few fibres from a light brown mottled turkey wing, followed by brown hackle

WING: A paired section of light brown mottled turkey wing

HEAD: Black

FERRET : Laminette ovale dorée fine

QUEUE : Section d'une plume de dinde brune pâle

CÔTES : Laminette ovale dorée

CORPS : Soie floche jaune

GORGE : Quelques fibres de plumes de dinde brun pâle, suivies de plumes brunes

AILES : Une paire de plumes de dinde brun pâle

TÊTE : Noire



Akroyd

Tier | Monteur: Bob MacDonald
 Creator | Créateur: Charles Akroyd

TAG: Fine oval silver tinsel

TAIL: Golden pheasant crest and a few strands from a golden pheasant tippet

RIB: Oval silver tinsel over both body sections

BODY: Rear half: yellow seal fur; front half: black floss

HACKLE: Lemon yellow over rear half; black heron over front half

THROAT: One turn of teal

WING: White turkey strips

CHEEKS: Jungle cock eyes, dropping

HEAD: Black

FERRET : Laminette ovale argentée fine

QUEUE : Crête de faisan doré et quelques brins de tippets de faisan doré

CÔTES : Laminette ovale argentée sur les deux sections

CORPS : Bourre de phoque jaune, suivie de soie floche noire

PALMURE : Jaune citron sur la première section; plume de héron noire sur la deuxième

GORGE : Sarcelle

AILES : Plumes de dinde blanches

JOUES : Coq de Sonnerat posé vers le bas

TÊTE : Noire



Aldo Salmo

Tier | Monteur: Marc LeBlanc

Creator | Créateur: Marc LeBlanc

TAG: Flat copper tinsel

TAIL: Crimson-dyed golden pheasant crest

BUTT: Green ostrich herl

RIB: Red flat followed by a green oval tinsel

BODY: Embossed copper tinsel

WING: Six root beer-coloured Krystal Flash strands and red fox hair on top

COLLAR HACKLE: Long natural grey heron or substitute, a red body feather from golden pheasant, and a small red-brown soft body hackle from the same bird

CHEEK: Jungle cock

HEAD: Brown

FERRET : Lame cuivrée

QUEUE : Crête de faisan doré teinte rouge

CUL : Plume d'autruche verte

CÔTES : Lame rouge, suivie d'une laminette ovale verte

CORPS : Lame gaufrée cuivrée

AILES : Six brins de « Krystal Flash » couleur « root beer » suivis de poils de renard roux

COLLERETTE : Longue plume grise de héron ou substitut, suivie d'une plume rouge de faisan doré et d'une plume rouge-brun de corps du même faisan

JOUES : Coq de Sonnerat

TÊTE : Brune



Alexandra

Tier | Monteur: Steve Silverio

Creator | Créateur: Unknown | Inconnu

TAG: Flat silver tinsel

TAIL: Scarlet hackle fibres

RIB: Oval silver tinsel

BODY: Flat silver tinsel

WING: Peacock sword fibres with red duck strips either side of the wing

COLLAR HACKLE: Black hackle

HEAD: Black

FERRET : Lame argentée

QUEUE : Pincée de poils de selle rouges

CÔTES : Laminette ovale argentée

CORPS : Lame argentée

AILES : Fibres de sabres de paon avec plumes rouges de canard de chaque côté de l'aile

COLLERETTE : Plume de selle de coq noire

TÊTE : Noire