

Chapter 1



Introduction

I started tying flies when I was 14 years old. I sold my first flies when I was 15—to a small general sporting goods store near Granby, Colorado. My stepfather, Jack Moore, took me inside, did all the selling, and all but closed the deal: every fly I had for 10 cents apiece, totalling about \$36. That was the start of my 15-year commercial tying career during which I tied over 250,000 flies.

Most of those early flies were Gray Hackles, Brown Hackles, Black Gnats, Mosquitoes, and Grizzly Kings. Those were the flies most anglers fished. Nymphs were little understood by the average angler and seldom available over the counter. I was intrigued by nymph patterns and bought samples when and where I found them and read everything on the subject. In 1975, this led to my first book, the *American Nymph Fly Tying Manual*, which was the first categorization of nymph patterns. In 1986, I published *The Fly Tyers Nymph Manual*; in 1994, the first edition of this book, and in 2000 the second edition. This third edition of *Tying Nymphs*, published in 2003, offers additional patterns and techniques.

During the past few years, changes in nymph patterns, tying techniques, and materials have accelerated. As a result, nymphs, like adult imitations (dry flies), have undergone a complete metamorphosis. As tyer-anglers become more familiar with specific food sources and fish preferences, imitations become more specific and exact. Only a handful of patterns that were popular in 1965 survive today. Some of the favorites during the 1980s and 1990s have drifted downstream; others have undergone a facelift. The generic brown-gray nymph of yesterday that was used to represent “those brownish-gray nymphs” is known today as a *Callibaetis*. This is not to imply that the “old style” nymphs are of no value. Several are featured in this book and continue to be popular, especially for “impressionistic” imitation. Other patterns, such as the Prince, have enjoyed a resurgence in popularity.

When wary fish are feeding selectively on a specific food source, the angler with a matching imitation should enjoy the best action. Remember, however, the fly is not the only factor determining success; *success also depends on how you use the fly*. Today a skilled angler outfitted with the best terminal tackle (rod, reel, line, leader, flies) can consistently fool feeding fish. In fact, such expert anglers *expect* to hook fish.

It is the goal of this book to instruct tyers how to tie perfect nymphs with speed, ease, and efficiency; to inform tyers of the latest advancements in designs and techniques; and to simplify and clearly explain fly tying materials.

Tyers should start at the beginning of this book and progress through to the end. The chapters are organized in a logical sequence

and build upon one another. After you have progressed through all the demonstration patterns, you should have the skills to construct all the patterns listed in the directory. You should also have a basic understanding of nearly all the subaquatic food sources of trout, which allows you to design your own nymphs. In other words, you determine the hook, materials, size, weight, color, and tying style.

Aspiring tyers who wish to accelerate their progress should seek out the best tyers and watch them tie. Local fly fishing stores and sport shows often showcase prominent tyers. The Federation of Fly Fishers annual conclave presents many of the best tyers under one roof. It is usually held in August. Regional conclaves also offer excellent tying seminars.

Tyer-anglers are also urged to broaden their knowledge through books. Books make available information accumulated over many life spans. You'll become a much better tyer-angler by reading, and you'll have more fun tying and fishing. Read all you can!

If you have a good fly fishing specialty store nearby, count yourself lucky. This is an excellent source of information. Hang around, ask questions, and listen. If seminars or classes are available, take advantage of them. Anglers who wish to get on the fast track should learn to cast, read, talk to everyone you can, and *go fishing*. Observe, investigate, experiment, and *think*. Much of what happens in nature is common sense. Don't complicate matters! A fishing friend or a specialty fly fishing store can save you a lot of frustration and many dollars and help make the entry level process fun and exciting. A fishing school or class can shave a decade off the learning process, and a week fishing with a good guide at a location where you hook lots of fish can trim off another five years. On a scale of zero to 10, a beginner can be fishing at level eight in two seasons.

If you are a beginner, welcome to the world of trout and all of its captivating mysteries. If you are an aficionado, I hope these pages stimulate your creativity and further the art of deception. Have fun!



Rainbow and spawned-out sockeye salmon.