



FLY FISHERS
INTERNATIONAL



FLY TYING GROUP

June 2024
FLY OF THE MONTH
Callibaetis Parachute



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Callibaetis Parachute

“So, what do you think of when I say the word spring?” Gretchen asked as Al entered the tying room after a quick trip to the super market. “Pussy willows and *Callibaetis*,” was his prompt reply. “Why do you ask?” She responded, “We got an email from Al Ritt while you were gone asking the same question about the FFI Fly of the Month. He wants us to write a piece on a spring-time mayfly pattern.” Al offered, “Let’s do a Callibaetis Parachute so we can demonstrate how to avoid a clogged hook eye. It would be the same technique illustrated in our book (*Innovative Flies and Techniques*).”

With the Ritt’s charter clearly in front of us we sat down at the vise to assemble the fly you see here today. Just thinking of it takes us back to the days when we lived in Montana and often spent spring mornings chasing huge rainbows on an unnamed pond north of Bozeman. Our pontoon boats would bob in the breeze with small gray “blobs” popping out of the water all around us. Those nondescript lumps of insect unfolded to become adult *Callibaetis* who quickly flew away. However not all of them escaped, that’s why the fish were so large in this pond.

We observed the hatching insects and gradually learned they are very vulnerable to the cruising trout all through the emerging and wing drying process. As soon as the divided, upright wings dried the mayfly easily avoided the meal-time-option in which it was the main course. But when it sat on the water with its wing divided (drying) it was just as vulnerable as a rumped, wing emerger breaking through the surface film. The trout were wise to that fact often keying on insects that were fully hatched but were still unable to fly. Today’s pattern is a divided wing parachute and now you know why. Or as old-time, radio commentator Paul Harvey would say, “Now you know the rest of the story!”

Before we tie the fly let’s talk for a moment about hook size. This mayfly’s size varies a lot based on species and generation. Here in the west there are more than a dozen different species of *Callibaetis* and some of them produce as many as three generations in a hatching season. Usually each generation is smaller than the previous of the same species. An early season insect may be a size-12 while a late season mayfly could as small as a size-16. We suggest keeping a fairly good range of sizes in your fly box so you are ready for any fishing situation.

Tying Video: (<https://youtu.be/VADTdpiygpHo>)

Materials

Hook: Size 10 to 16, standard dry fly

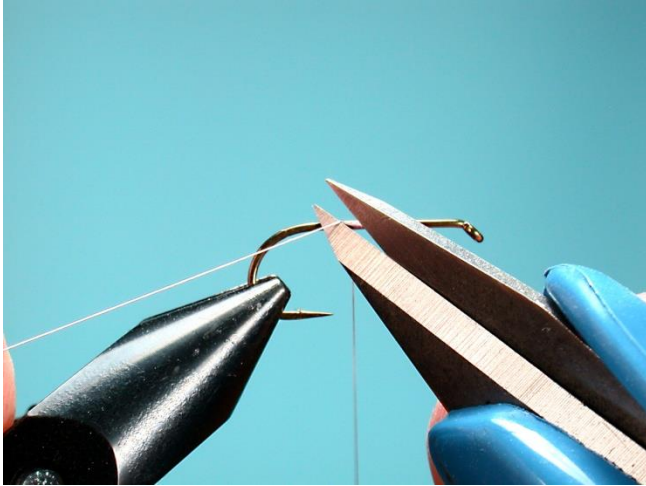
Thread: Gray

Tail: Dun hackle fibers

Body: Gray dubbing

Wings: Grizzly wonder wings

Hackle: Dun, parachute style



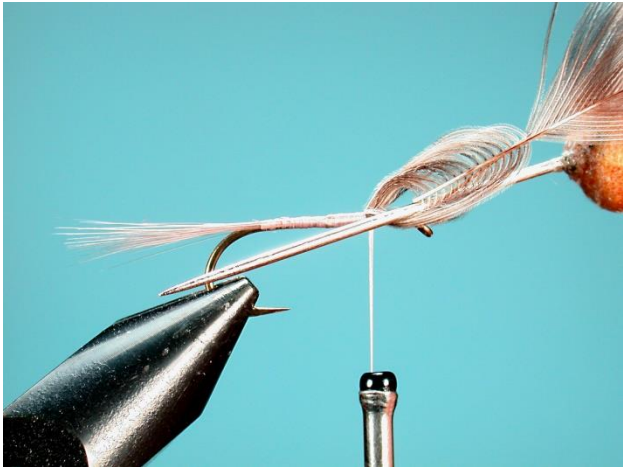
Step 1: Place the hook in the vise after pinching the barb. Start a thread base one-third back from the eye on the hook and wrap half way to the end of shank. Trim the waste piece of thread.



Step 2: Select a clump of hackle fibers and tie them to the shank constructing a tail that is slightly longer than the complete hook. Trim any waste ends and advance the thread to the one-third position.



Step 3: Select two large, grizzly hackle feathers, place them back-to-back with their natural curve opposing each other, and even the tips. Cut the thick base of the stems off even with each other. Stroke the fibers back from the trimmed stems to form a looped wing. The length of the stems (with the stroked back fibers) should be shorter than the span of the hook shank so the resulting wing is looped rather than anchoring the stem to the hook. Tie the feathers to the hook capturing the stem and fibers with three snug (but not tight) thread wraps.



Step 4: Pull on the feathers slipping enough swept back fibers out from under the thread turns to form a wing as long as the hook shank. If you don't maintain control of BOTH ends the process it can go astray really fast. Trim the waste then cover it with a layer of thread ending with the last turn in front of the fibers. Notice the loop in the wings.



Step 5: Wrap around fibers placing each turn above the previous until you have an area sufficient to accommodate a parachute hackle application in a future step. Go from the top of this application straight to the shank and anchor the up/down strand of thread with a couple of wraps. Wrap back up the post and again go from the top to the hook shank anchoring the thread there once again. Repeat this process once more to finish the parachute post. Think of the turns of thread going around the feather fibers as concrete and the straight-up-and-down strands as rebar. We'll place more rebar in the next step.



Step 6: Trim the excess part of the feathers from the wings and place them (butt first) in a clothespin. They are not waste feathers but future wings in the rough. Place a crisscross wrap of thread between the wings to divide them and also add more rebar to our project.



Step 7: Apply dubbing to the thread and construct a body behind the wings/post. When you reach the back of the wings stop, select a dun feather, and strip the fibers from the base of the stem. Tie the feather to the hook in front of the post while dubbing forward to the hook eye. Don't stop there but dub back to the wings making the last turn behind them. You probably thought we forgot the rebar but we didn't. Pull the feather up and bind the stripped stem/rebar together while anchoring the feather to the post. Wrap the thread back down the post and be certain to leave it hanging behind it.



Step 8: Wrap the parachute hackle down the post until it reaches the body. Hold the feather down and take three turns of thread around the base of the post to tie it off. Trim the waste feather at the base of the post. At this point the fly tier can either whip-finish around the base of the post or pull the strand forward and anchor it at the hook eye using a half-hitch tool. It's your choice. We prefer bringing it to the hook eye and finishing the fly with the tool.



Step 9: At this point the fly tier can either whip-finish around the base of the post or pull the strand forward and anchor it at the hook eye using a half-hitch tool. It's your choice. We prefer bringing it to the hook eye and finishing the fly with the tool.

Editors Notes: Comments from the editor.

Fly of the Month: Do you know someone who you think should be featured in the Fly of the Month? If so, feel free to refer them. If you have a camera and computer, you can write a Fly of the Month article to honor your favorite tier tying their best creation. For details contact the Fly Tying Group at ftg@flyfishersinternational.org.

Please note: The demonstration you are viewing makes no claim, implied or otherwise, that the presenter or demonstrator of the fly pattern was the original creator of the fly. This is the guest tier's version of this fly and it may differ from the creator's or other versions and variations.

Please Credit FFI Website or FFI Fly Tying Group Fly of the Month with any use of the pattern.

You can direct any questions or comments to ftg@flyfishersinternational.org.