

February, 2001- The Irresistible



Shown here is the Irresistible Wulff

Irresistible: What we all want our flies to be

By Jim Abbs

New techniques and new fly patterns play upon our need to fool those unseen lunkers we know are hiding in the deep holes of our favorite waters. However, like homemade bread and real log fires, there is much to be said for traditional tools and old time ways. If you look into the history of fly fishing there were many successful methods and tools that somehow, along the way, lost their appeal. Often there was little functional reason for these changes in popularity. In the last 30 or so years it seems we have especially bought the idea that something new must be better. While Madison Avenue may be to blame, favoring new things is probably just human nature. More importantly, it is unlikely that fish feeding habits are very different than they were 100 years ago.

One set of fly patterns that fall into the once very popular, once-famous category are those of **irresistible** style. Basically, an **irresistible** refers to a dry fly (primarily to imitate an insect, not a frog or other critter) that is tied with a spun deer hair body. Included in this category are the irresistible mayfly patterns (Ratfaced McDougall, Adams irresistible, Woodchuck irresistible, Wulff irresistible, and the original Irresistible). However, clipped deer hair flies imitate other insects, like the Irresistible Caddis and Irresistible housefly as well as the Bullet-head and Goddard caddis.

Of course, we know that the clipped hair bodies originated in the frog hair bugs from Joe Messinger of West Virginia. The first application of this technique to insect imitations for trout was in the 1930s by the famous Catskill's tyer Harry Darbee of Roscoe, New York. Harry and his wife Elsie Darbee combined the high-floating clipped deer hair body of a bass bug with hackles and wings of a trout fly. The original fly had deer hair wings, although

other irresistibles have wings of hackle tips (Irresistible Adams) or calf tail (Irresistible Wulff).

At first these flies were called H.A. Darbee's Special Mayflies and are said to have sold thousands. A second name, Beaverkill Bastard was adopted for a bit, but it was replaced by one more generally acceptable, the Ratfaced McDougall. The key to this style of fly is that it looks very buggy and floats forever, even in the roughest water. It is an attractor type, not an imitation of any particular species of mayfly. The irresistibles were favorites (and still are in some hands) particularly for trout, both in the eastern U.S. and the mountain west. Many anglers liked irresistibles for Atlantic salmon (like Lee Wulff) and Dave Whitlock recommends them for panfish.

One possible reason for the waning popularity of these flies is the apparent difficulty of creating a spun deer hair body. However, deer hair spinning is not difficult and with a little patience it will become second nature.

MATERIALS

Hook: Standard dry fly, like the Mustad 94840, Tiemco 5210 (some tyers prefer a longer or heavier hook)

Thread: Tan or black monocord 3/0

Tail: Dark deer or moose hair (grizzly for the Adams Irresistible)

Body: Gray deer (elk, caribou) hair, spun and clipped

Wings: Dark deer body (or bucktail) hair. Grizzly hackle tips are used for the Adams Irresistible, while calf tail is used for the Wulff Irresistible.

Hackle: Medium to dark dun or grizzly for the Adams Irresistible.

TYING STEPS

1. Tie in tail at a length about $\frac{3}{4}$ of hook shank length beyond hook bend and trim excess. Wrap fibers down firmly.
2. Choose a small bunch of deer hair (start with a match stick size bundle) and remove fine hairs using a comb.
3. Position the bunch of hair with the butts facing forward, pinching it between your left thumb and index finger. Make one to two loose wraps around the bunch of deer hair and the hook shank and pull firmly on the thread to make the hair flare out from the shank.
4. Wrap the thread forward and in front of the flared deer hair. A small fly may only require one bunch of hair, larger flies (size 12 for example) will require 2-3. If the fly is larger wrap in another bunch of deer hair, repeating the steps to make it flare. Repeat the process until about half the hook shank is covered with flared (or spun) deer hair.
5. Tie off in front of last bunch of deer hair and apply cement.
6. Take the fly from the vise and using a sharp scissors with a fine point, clip the deer hair to a shape tapered toward the tail. Take care not to cut the tail fibers.
7. Put the fly back in the vise. Tie in a clump of deer hair for the wings with the tips facing forward. Trim the butt ends and secure hair with a few more wraps and apply a drop of cement.
8. Wrap in front of wing to bring it upright. Separate the hair into two bunches for two wings and do a figure 8 around the bases to further support and separate them.
9. Wrap thread behind the wings and tie in hackle. Often two hackles are used for a big size fly. In the case of the Adams Irresistible, one grizzly and one brown hackle are used. Wind the hackle forward, tie off and trim excess.

10. Whip finish the head and cement. Try this fly on some of your bigger waters this season. History tells us that you will not be disappointed!

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