

SPARKLE DUN
(AKA Comparadun)



Comments:

Ellen Clark, Ft. Washakie, WY, said she was tying a Comparadun at the 2011 FFF Fly Fishing Fair in West Yellowstone, MT. At first I thought we already have one in Jim Abbs' article, FFF Fly of the Month June 1998. However, it is such a good pattern that maybe we should have a second article with the steps. I was relieved to see that she was not tying a Comparadun but a Sparkle Dun.

Like many great patterns this one has a history. In *Hatches*, 1975 Al Caucci and Bob Nastasi described how the Compara-dun started in the 1960's as a refinement of the "Haystack" an old Adirondacks pattern. The Haystack was a huge pile of deer hair and fur. With years of refinement and field testing it became a more delicate pattern that sat on the water like most newly hatched mayflies. It was also more durable than many of the no hackle patterns introduced in 30's through the early 70's. Many many years ago while walking to dinner in Hardin, MT I overheard a lady exclaiming about the Comparadun and all the fish she caught that day in the Bighorn River. I vowed to learn about that pattern. (A note: About half of my reference books by respected authors have the dash in the name and the others do not, so I will stick with the way I learned it -- no dash.)

In the 80's Craig Mathews and John Juracek of West Yellowstone, MT improved the Comparadun by replacing the forked tails with Z-lon, a sparkly Antron material. Many tiers have a problem with forked tails so this "new" pattern was hailed as wonderful improvement. Sometimes I think that we fly tiers/fishers are a bit silly. However, in defense of the improvement, Z-lon does simulate the shuck of a newly hatched mayfly that is trapped in the surface film. Also, it caught **a lot of fish**. Its fame began spreading first in Montana and Idaho, and then quickly to the rest of the world.

Since it doesn't have a lot of flotation, it is best used in quieter stretches of the river. A drag free float is important. I asked Ellen: "Where do you fish it?" The answer: "Where ever you want to catch trout." She usually fishes the medium water, and it works fine.

Materials list:

Hook: Dry fly hook, DaiRiki 300, Mustad 94840, Tiemco TMC 100 or equivalent #12-18

Thread: 6/0 color to match the body

Tail: Antron yarn or Z-lon, Ellen, doesn't use white, and prefers some light color.

Wing: Elk hock

Body: Fine X-Dub, color to match the natural

Tying steps:



1. Smash barb and wind a short thread base at the rear of the hook.



2. Tie in tail of Antron or Z-lon yarn. Don't use much. Usually you will have to take 1/2, 1/3rd or less of the yarn fibers to make the tail thin enough to simulate a shuck. Tie down any excess tail material, and return the thread to the bend of the hook.



3. Cut the shuck to about a shank length long



4. Cut a small clump of elk hock fibers, clean out under fur and stack. (Ellen said it takes two or three flies to get the size of the bundle right.) Elk hock is straight so it stacks nicely. Remember to take the hair out of the stacker with the tips pointing the way you want to tie them in (forward). Wind the thread forward to the 1/3rd point, and make a thread base there. Elk hock is not as hollow as deer hair so it will not flair as much. The downside is that it might not float as well. Lay the clump of fibers on top of the hook with a shank length or a little more beyond the 1/3rd point of the tips pointing forward. Tie in the elk hock with tight thread winds. The thread base helps keep the hair from spinning. Keep hair on top of the hook. Clip butts and wind thread over the butts. (On smaller flies I use a more hollow hair like Coast Deer.)



5. Lift about 1/3rd of the fibers to a vertical position and put one turn of thread in front of them. Do this again with another third of the fibers. Finally lift the rest of the fibers, pull them toward the rear and put a bunch of thread winds tightly in front of them.



6. Wind the thread behind the wings and down the tapered butts to the bend of the hook. Put dubbing on the thread and wrap the body toward the wing, but do not push against the wing. Wrapping tightly against the wing will force it forward. Figure eight under the wing to cover the thread.



7. Change the dubbing color in front of the wings if you want. Starting with a big bunch of dubbing, catch a few fibers with thread then pull the bundle away to thin out the dubbing as you form the noodle. Wrapping the dubbed thread against front of the wing helps keep it upright. Taper the front body to the eye. Whip finish at the eye. Turn the fly toward you so you can see to adjust the elk hair.



8. The Elk fibers should be fanned out forming a 180-degree arc. You might have to adjust the fibers a bit as you go. Head cement is not recommended for this fly because it will wick back into the dubbing and reduce the fly's buoyancy.

Closing comments: While Ellen tied this pattern a lady watching commented that she has a lot of trouble making the wings stand up. As Ellen did the 1/3rd, 1/3rd, 1/3rd bit on the elk hock, (Step 5), she exclaimed wow!!! so that's how you do it. That response makes the day for a demo tier. This pattern is adaptable to almost any hatch. So check your bugs and tie the few Sparkle Duns or Comparaduns to match. Ellen also ties a few regular Comparaduns with the forked tails. After the demo there was a discussion among several tiers about using Rain-X on the fly and fly lines. Ellen uses it on fly lines, and it seems to be a good cleaner/floater. Another fellow uses it on flies. It makes them easier to clean and dry. I'll have to try both.

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You can direct any questions or comments to FOM at flyofthemoth@fedflyfishers.org