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Saltwater Blondes by Tabory (top, moving clockwise): 3/0 Yellow Blonde; 1/0 Pink Keel Blonde; 1/0 Platinum Keel Blonde; and 1/0 Yellow Blonde. Photo by the author.

This Gentleman Prefers BLONDES

By LOU TABORY

THE LATE JOE BROOKS, considered by many, myself included, to be the father of salt-water fly fishing, designed the Blonde more than twenty years ago. As with many other old names like Adams, Light Cahill, Gray Ghost, and Mickey Finn, the Blonde has remained a classic simply because it continues to take fish when other flies fail. Many fly patterns have since fallen by the wayside, but not the Blonde.

The way salt-water fly rodding has gained in popularity by leaps and bounds, new flies are being designed all the time and it takes a good fly to hold its place as a popular pattern. The Blonde has had little trouble staying in the top ten among the long rodders of the brine.

When I first started saltwater fly fishing eight years ago, I took my first striper on a Platinum Blonde. It was a sunny July day about 7:30 in the morning. Normally, fishing was over once the sun came up; however, Larry Krygier and I were working the rip out from the back side of Cockenoe Island

off Westport, Connecticut. It was the first part of an outgoing tide and sand eels were being pushed out with the tide. Birds were diving and there was just enough bait to make things interesting. The sand eels were not schooled up, just scattered, and if fish were here, we would have a ball.

All of a sudden the fish started breaking and swirling in the rip. Using light spinning rods, we took fish on White Bucktail jigs. Having the fly rod set up in the boat, I felt now was my chance to take one on the fly rod. I set aside the spinning stick and started stripping fly line from the reel. I unleashed the white Blonde from the hook collar and worked out about 70 feet of fly line. After maybe a dozen casts, I connected with my first fly-caught striper. As the action continued, I proceeded to take seven more fish, all on my home-tied Blonde. Now I'm sure the fish under these circumstances would have taken most flies, nonetheless, the Blonde fit the occasion. And who knows, maybe the Blonde would

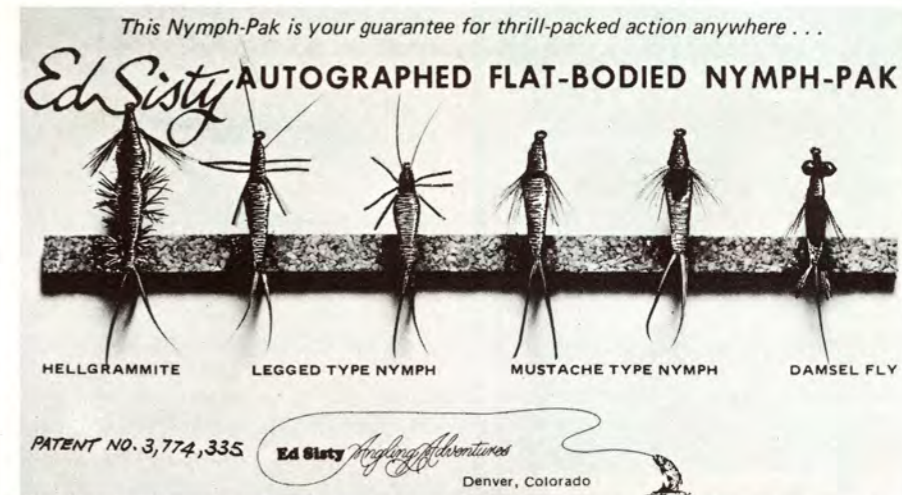
have outfished them all. It certainly went stride for stride with the bucktail Larry was using.

Throughout the entire year under many different conditions, I took fish on the Blonde. My first year and every year after found a number of different color and size Blondes in my fly box.

I have used the Blonde throughout the entire northeast and have taken stripers, blues, weakfish, pollock and mackerel. On trips down South, I caught a host of fish with this fly.

Although the Blonde was primarily a saltwater creation, it is also a good little freshwater pattern. I enjoyed some great fishing with squirrel-tail, brown-and-yellow and brown-and-white Blondes. Tied on #8, 10 and 12 hooks, the Blonde took many different species of fish from both lake and stream. It is the breathing action of the fly in water that makes it so deadly.

One of the great advantages of the Blonde is its simplicity. It is a very basic fly, which means it is constructed of very few materials and is very easy to tie. Really, all the materials one needs to tie the fly are some bucktail, thread and a hook. A body of either mylar or chenille can be added, and mylar can also be used in the wing if so desired.➤



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1. Begin with tail, tying on over body. Mylar can be added into tail.



3. Tie in wing at 45° angle.



2. Wrap on 3/32" mylar for body.



4. Finish off fly with whipped head.

TO TIE THE BLONDE for salt water, start with a stainless steel short- or medium-shank hook ranging in size from #1-3/0. (If making flies for fresh water, a bronzed-wire hook #6-12 is fine. I

like a stainless steel for salt water because they are rust free. Be sure to sharpen the hook by triangulating the hook on three sides.

First, tie on a segment of bucktail

about 1½ times the length of the hook shank. (Put a drop of head cement where hair is first wrapped on; it will hold the fly together and make it much stronger.) The hair should cover the hook shank. (Length of tail depends on the size fly that is desired.) Now tie on hair toward the eye of hook. Leave about ¼-inch of space to tie in wing.

Tie in a piece of 3/32" mylar tinsel about 10 inches long and wrap toward the tail and back again, covering the bucktail on the shank of the hook.

The fly is now ready for the wing. Take another segment of bucktail about the same length as the tail and tie it in where the mylar body ended. Again, I use a drop of head cement where the bucktail is being secured. It is important to raise the wing above the hook shank. This is where the fly gets its action. A few turns of thread will hold the wing at about a 45° angle to the hook shank. A few strips of 1/64" mylar can be added to the wing for extra flash. To complete the fly, wrap the head and coat with cement.

FOR MOST FISHING I use either the white or yellow Blonde. I find in salt water those two colors are all one needs. Other fellows who like to make

many different colors and dress up their fly box can tie Blondes with any color combination they desire.

Bucktail is not the only material to use on Blondes. I use nylon, polar bear hair, and any number of materials which will make a good fly.

The Blonde will simulate many different bait fish, depending on how you tie it. If dressed sparsely, you imitate a sand eel. A little more material will give it the appearance of a spearing. However, the Blonde is primarily a herring imitation because of its short, stocky body. Some anglers use the Blonde for all-around fishing, while I like to build them bushy for a more stocky appearance. However, as an attractor the Blonde is a great fly.

The Blonde has been around for over twenty years. It probably will be around for another twenty. Many other fancy flies have come and gone but the basic Blonde is still with us. I fish with a number of fancy flies and they are very effective; nevertheless, I still use Blondes and continue to catch fish, for the Blonde has that certain combination of simplicity, style and a rousing action that makes fish strike. ■

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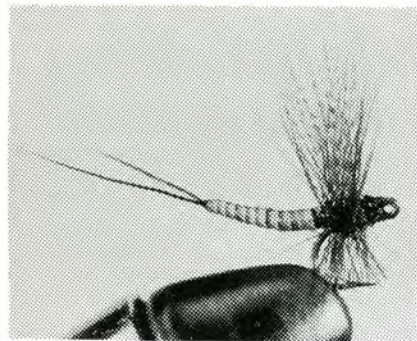
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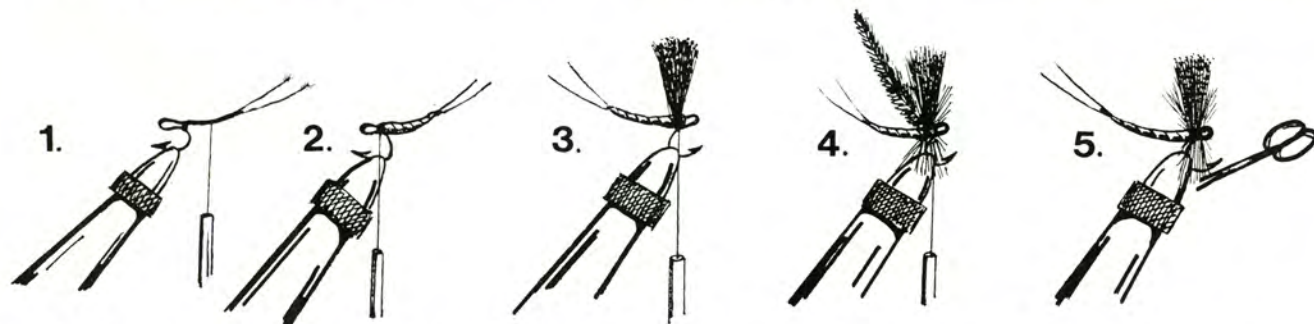
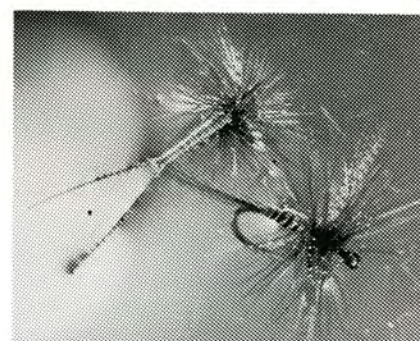


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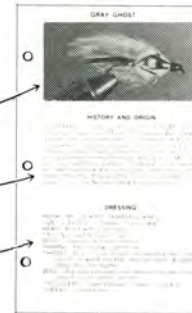
TROUT and SALMON FLY

INDEX*

By Dick Surette

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History and Origin
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