

John Goddard, BMP Mayflies and me

This is a fun story. I like to invent wacky flies. It's possible you've noticed.



In 1979 I published an article in Dick Surrence's Fly Tyer Magazine about dry flies with up-pointing hooks and bottom-mounted parachute hackles. I included black and white photos (basement darkroom) of a Mayfly Dun and a low-profile, dry fly Caddis.

I used a short shank Alnwick hook with an "up eye." When the fly was perched with the hook pointing up, the up-eye pointed down. Supposedly anyway.

I published in 1979. In 1980 Brian Clarke and John Goddard published "The Trout and the Fly." Their seminal work included "Revolutionary Invention" claims for an upside down mayfly that "No one had tied before."

I tied it. I published it too—a year before they did.

I suspect we invented the same fly, both ignorant and unaware of the other's work. Goddard was mistaken when he claimed ownership. Copyright and invention credit unequivocally go to the earliest publication, as mandated by long established international law.

I published first. Bottom-mounted parachute belongs to me. Upside down dry fly hooks too for that matter, although I now regard the upside down hook idea as more burden than asset.

Internet strangers have warned me for decades—sometimes even politely—to be more careful about my claims, because John Goddard got there first. I am writing now to set the record straight.

The Fun Part

After I published my 1979 Fly Tyer piece I bragged about my fly. I invented it. I caught fish with it. I was a proud and happy house framer in Montana. I was a published author with a beautiful wife and daughter. Life was good.

Someone eventually asked me if my upside down dry flies landed correctly.



I was born with bad eyesight. My gut instantly told me to be worried. I tested my flies, bad eyesight and all. Ouch. My nifty upside down flies were not so smart after all.

My upside down flies landed on their side almost as often as hook points up. They landed correct side wrong sometimes too—with the hook pointing down rather than up.

Hooks are relatively heavy. They pull their own weight, so to speak. The heaviest part of any fly tends to land first. I hadn't noticed. But so it was.

The fish didn't seem to notice either, which is the most interesting punchline in the story.

John and Brian were interested in up-pointing hooks because they “Kept the hook out of the surface tension.” It may be possible to delicately balance a dry fly so it lands reliably upside down. My efforts were 50 50 at best.

For me the crucial point was real world trout behavior, rather than intuitive homo sapiens speculation. What I ultimately observed was piscatorial indifference.

Rising trout tend to eat what comes their way when color, size, vague profile and characteristic surface-tension dimples coincide with their active, mid-hatch feeding rhythm. They rise to dry flies made by humans too, even when drifting with un-intended postures.

I never volunteered a sentence about upside down dry flies again.

When upside down hook questions do come up I cop. My creative idea was a flop.

I still tie bottom-mounted parachutes. I love them. BMP parachutes are not only mine, they are an identity design for me.

I published again on 09/13/1990, in Fly Fisherman's Fly Tier's Bench. "The BMP Dun," this time without the upside down hook idea.

My first bottom mounted parachute flies, with or without an upside down hook, were tied with a short, thin (stainless steel) wire crossbar underneath the shank, around which the BMP parachute was wound.

'The Fly Patterns of John Goddard' (2003) refers to a "V-shaped wire post."

The earlier (1980) "Trout and the Fly" by Goddard and Clarke described and illustrated an interesting gallows technique of Brian's. I like Brian's technique, although, as characterized by Goddard, it is time consuming and complex.

I got my version of the wire idea from Ernie Schwiebert when I was teenager,¹ My dad and Ernie were fishing friends. Ernie told me about a West German tyer who made extended dun bodies with thin wire added to a short hook.

My first wire crossbars (decades before Goddard's 2003 date) worked but they were troublesome. The sharp wire ends too often snagged and cut a hackle stem or the thread.

I traded wire for short stiff monofilament and had better luck. I used short mono melted at the ends at first, but also experimented with tying around a 3" inch or so mono crossbar instead. I finished up with carpenter's glue (I was one in those days) at the fulcrum of the parachute. After the glue cured I clipped the crossbar off with toenail clippers. Carpenters glue eventually gave way to thick CA glue (Sandy's SuperFly).

I now have faster, easier ways yet. The wire crossbar, which I had long ago abandoned in favor of mono, was presented by Goddard in 2003, in his Trout Fly Patterns of John Goddard, as an ingenious improvement to the 1980 Brian Clarke idea. John Goddard missed an earlier publication again, this time by thirteen years instead of one.

Did John Goddard's upside down dry flies land correctly more often than mine? At a better rate than 50 50? Has anyone succeeded at upside down dry flies? I saw an internet claim of 80% only a few weeks ago (which is still 20% wrong side down).

I often make separate, modularly independent wing/bodies on a waxy, horizontal beading needle.

¹ Schwiebert wire context
[Being Ernest](#)



I mount a recently finished wing/body *loosely* on a short, curved, light-wire hook. I then make enough horizontal thread wraps, between body and shank, to build up a small vertical thread post. I then wind the horizontal parachute, also between body and shank. This is a fast and easy hack. I can complete two of my BMP feather tails in the time it takes me to make one Catskill mayfly.

I won't attempt instructions as words alone. Youtube is in the works.



Conclusion

BMP Hackles **YES**. Upside down hooks maybe, maybe not. Upside down dry flies were tempting intellectually, kinda sorta. But not much more than a fly tier's trip, once on the water.

I wish Brian, John and I had known each other. John was hyper-creative. So too was Brian. Perhaps more so than John. They were almost as wacky as me.

That's my story and I'm gluing to it.

Paradigm Caddis



Paranormal Maufly





Paraduccks Mayfly

