

Fly of the month

This month's fly is the Alexandra, which was a great favourite of Lindsay Haslem, and the correct tying of which was demonstrated by Bruce Tole at the September fly tying evening.

The Alexandra was originally devised by either W.G.Turle or Dr John Brunton in about 1860 and named Lady of the Lake. It was reputedly so successful that it was banned on some waters. The later name of Alexandra is usually said to be in honour of Princess Alexandra but she wasn't born until 1936. It is more likely to have been renamed after Queen Alexandra, the very popular and beautiful wife of Edward VII who she married in 1863. Edward VII reigned until 1910 so she was around at the right time for the fly to be named after her.



Hook : 12 – 6
Thread : Black
Tail : Red ibis or substitute such as red duck fibres
or goose biots.
Body : Silver tinsel or mylar
Rib : Silver wire
Hackle: Black hen, beard style
Wing : Peacock sword feather herl.

Cheeks : As per the tail

The tying sequence is fairly straightforward. Lay the foundation thread from eye to bend of hook and tie in the tail. Tie in ribbing and body material and take thread forward to behind the eye. Wind body material forward, tie it down and the counterwind the ribbing and tie that down. For the beard hackle you can either turn the fly over and tie in a few strands of hen hackle or wind on a regular collar hackle and trim the top off. Next comes the tricky bit that can make the fly look a complete mess if you don't get it right and that is tying on the sword herl in that nice, tidy, swept back fashion.

Bruce showed us that the best way to achieve that look is to bunch four or five strands of herl on the sword feather with their tips parallel and all curving downwards before you snip or tear them from the feather. Keep them nicely bunched and **moisten them** before placing them on the hook and tying them in. Tie them in so that they extend past the bend of the hook level with the end of the tail. Then it's only a matter of tying in the red cheeks, whip finishing and varnishing the head.

Bruce says that he and Lindsay generally preferred a slim tie with only four or five strands of herl for the wing but more can be used if you wish.



This is what your Alexandra can look like if you don't get that winging right!

Thanks for the tips, Bruce.

The Alexandra is a baitfish imitation, allegedly originally tied to represent the redfin perch and, as such is said to be best fished in dance time, i.e slow, slow, quick-quick, slow.

More on the Alexandra

After the September flytying I happened to have some Alexandras in the box when I went up to Swan Bay, Great Lake on Thursday 6th October. It was one of those low pressure trough days, flat calm, mild, and on-and-off drizzling rain. Fish were rising when it wasn't raining and I got one nice brown on an unweighted nymph. But in one of the rainy spells a fish or two started swirling in the drowned bushes so, in case they were chasing galaxia, I tied on an Alexandra. Got a nice 1.4 kg brown on the third or fourth cast in the bushes. The fish had a couple of galaxia in its stomach, along with a heap of little electric blue beetles which I reckon is what the galaxia had been on before the brown turned up.

Alan Taylor