

The Hornberg: *by Carl Haensel* Streamer with a Twist

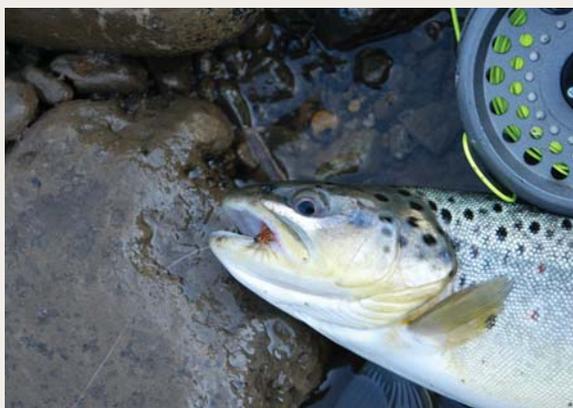
Originally a Wisconsin pattern, the Hornberg was created by Frank Hornberg, a game warden from Portage County, Wisconsin, and the pattern was popularized by the Weber Company of Steven's Point. The Hornberg was first tied as a dry fly to represent a large sedge caddis, and it has proven to be a versatile pattern. It has been adapted and tied in many variations, including its popular current variation as a streamer.

As a streamer, this fly has a most interesting and unusual property because of its thick hackle: It can be used as both a dry fly and a streamer. A true multi-purpose fly, it is a great searching pattern to use to explore new water. The most prominent and functional aspects of this fly are its mallard flank wings. When stripped underwater they pulsate and offer the angler a fly that provides movement. It doesn't just sit there. The barred appearance of the wings imitates small fish well, especially small trout and their parr markings. The smaller sizes of this fly can be some of the most effective small streamers available.

When fished as a dry fly, the Hornberg sits in the water's surface film. The mallard flank tented wing makes it resemble many of the large sedge caddis flies. Try treating it thoroughly with flotant to make it stay up a little bit longer. Versions that are tied on lighter and thinner hooks make this easier.

Cast it upstream and fish it on a dead drift as you would most dry flies. As opposed to most caddis flies, this one does not skitter across the surface well, so you will need to keep your rod tip high and your line tight if you use this technique.

To make this fly truly effective, a combination dry fly and streamer approach can be used. It can be cast upstream and drifted until the fly starts to swing be-



This nice brown trout fell for a Hornberg streamer that was cast near a logjam. Don't be afraid to put your flies right into thick cover. You'll certainly lose some flies, but the rewards can be great.

low your position on the stream. Then the fly can be pulled under the surface with a rapid strip, and used as a streamer. As the fly continues to swing, strip it toward you in short, sharp pulses. The fly will ride just under the water's surface, as an escaping baitfish might behave. Fish from one position on the stream with this approach, and then shift a few feet upstream. That way, fish that have seen no fly will see the dry version first, a more delicate pre-

sentation. The fish in the middle will see the swing, and the fish that just saw the dry fly or swing will see a stripped streamer.

Even though this pattern allows you to show the fish a variety of presentations with one fly, some anglers choose to fish this pattern as a streamer all the time. If the fish are cold and down deep or if the water is off color, this tactic can be especially rewarding. If this strategy is your choice, you can fish this fly as you'd fish most other streamers. Since this fly is generally tied without any weight, you can include a splitshot or two in front of the fly to get it down in the current. Use a down-and-across cast to optimize the action of this fly, and an upstream cast if you've added weight and need to get the fly deep.

Another option is to swing your fly in front of a submerged stump or logjam. As your cast ends and your line stops swinging and straightens, hold the streamer in place near the obstruction that you've targeted. The mallard flank feathers will undulate in the current, which can provoke a hard strike. Twitch the fly a bit and wait. If you get no response, strip the fly back in, keep casting, and believe in your fly.

While there is no magic in a Hornberg that I know of, there's more than one angler who has made this pattern the "go-to" fly—for good reason. ☐