Fly of the Month Clinic: Tilt Wing Adams

By Ramsey Greene



This month, rather than call out a specific recipe, this fly is a generic application of the tilt wing technique. The tilt wing, or hair wing parachute, can be applied to any traditional parachute pattern fly. I use this on everything from Klinkhamers to parachute hoppers – with deer hair, elk hair, and synthetics. Apply it to some Smoky Mountain favorites for a deadly variation on the seasonal staples. In the winter, try it on a BWO or for the spring, use it in a Parachute Hairs Ear or Purple Haze. For the summer, it is a fantastic way to dress up a Smoky Mountain Candy, Schoeder's Hopper or Yellow Sally. It's a great way to add indicators to dry fly patterns too. To focus on just the technique, I'm going simply tie the back end as a traditional parachute Adams

Ingredients:

Hooks: Any dry fly hook Sizes 12-18. I generally never use below a 18. Today we are using TMC100 size 12

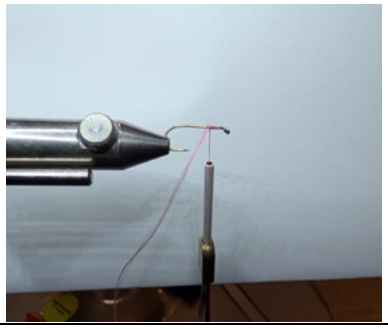
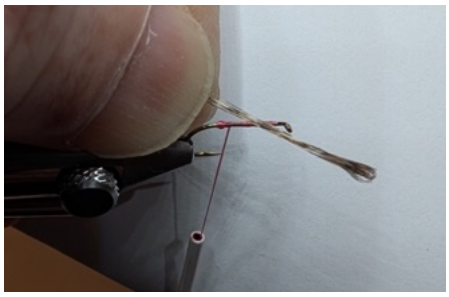
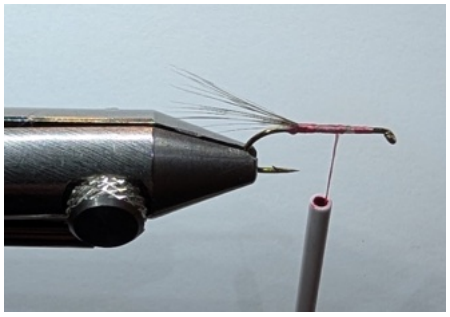
Body: Adams grey superfine. Substitute any color

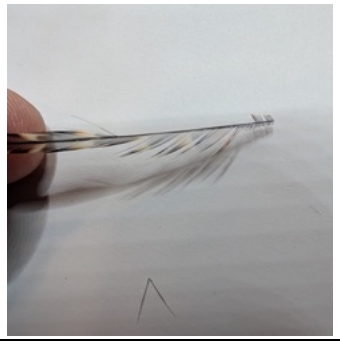
Thread: Semperfli Nano Silk 100D (12/0) Gray (I use red in some pictures for detail). You can use any 6/0 – 12/0 in black, red, copper, or brown. I do prefer GSP thread for this fly.

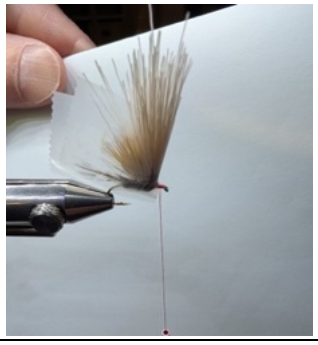
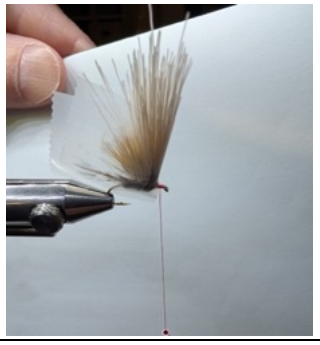
Wing/Post: Fine deer or elk hair. I find I like deer over elk for most trout patterns these days, but either one works fine. Most important factor is quality hair.

Hackle: Size 12- 14 dry fly hackle. Saddle hackle will make this much easier, longer feathers are easier to manipulate. You can use whatever color you prefer, my go to is Cree or grizzly variant for Adams.

Steps:

		
1. Start the thread near the eye and create a thread base back to just before the bend. If you want a fanned-out tail, add a little thread ball.	2a. Tie in the tail fibers.	2b. Tip: tilt the butt ends to slightly face you. When you wrap the tail fibers in, they will rotate to the top of the hook.

		
3a. Pull out a tuft of dubbing that floats on a breeze. You can always bulk up a fly, but it trickier to evenly remove dubbing.	3b. Dub the fly forward to about the 2/3-3/4 mark.	4. Select a hackle and prepare the feather as seen in Pic. I trim the tie in point and shiny side facing me, pull the barbs off the upper edge. This makes for a much cleaner parachute wrap regardless of technique.
		
5. Tie in the hackle dull side up. When it is wrapped, the shiny side should face down.	6. Select a clump of deer hair and comb and stack. After stacking, remove and hold just the butt ends. Pull out any short hair and then restack. After a second stacking, hold by the tips, then remove and trim the butt ends to be even - leaving as much length as practical. Stack the hair for the final time. For an average small stacker, it should now appear less than half full. Tip: Stacking the hair multiple times makes it easier to handle and create a much cleaner looking wing.	7a. Tie in the deer, like an elk hair caddis wing, hair just forward of the hackle tie in point. At this point, there are multiple variations on the wraps depending on how I want the wing to look.

		
7b. For a typical tilt wing, I do 5 wraps vertically and three in front of the wing. I follow this with 1-2 wraps around just the butt ends to bind them together. Finish this step with 3-5 horizontal wraps around the hair wing base. Finish with the thread hanging on the far side of the hook just in front of the wing. I often use a little head cement on the wing wraps at this point to make a more durable fly	8. Optional: Lightly dub the thorax with crossing wraps to cover the thread holding the hair wing finishing on the far side of the hook in front of the wing. I find the fish don't care at all if I skip this step.	9. Grab the hackle and wrap it around the entire base of the tilt wing parachute style (counter clockwise if viewed from above). I usually use 3-5 wraps for most dry flies (more for hoppers, etc.). Leave the hackle hanging off the far side of the hook just in front of the wing after last wrap. The weight of your hackle pliers will hold it in place.
		
10. Leaving the hackle hanging with the weight of the hackle pliers, wrap the thread around the same direction as the hackle at least three wraps. Add 1-2 half hitches after the last wrap and trim the tag hackle.	11. Take a piece of Scotch tape and cut a small slit on the bottom edge at the half way mark. Slowly slide this over hook eye using the slit to guide you. This will function as a temporary hackle guard while we finish the thread head and whip finish.	12. Create a small thread head and whip finish.

		
13a. Use a bodkin to separate the tip ends from the butt ends.	13b. Grab the butt ends of the tilt wing as a clump, slide your scissors down to trim the wing to suit.	14. Apply your favorite thread cement to the head and the middle of the hair clump.

Once you have the basic technique down, there are multiple variations to use to create lots of different looks. Some of my favorites are:

•I use 8-10 wraps when tying in the hair wing if I want the wing to lay more horizontal, or only 3 if I want it to stand more vertically. Try this with traditional stimulators to turn them into easy to see parachute stimulators.

•I stack some flash or calf tail in with the deer hair for patterns that are hard to see. Consider adding 5-6 strands of crystal flash to make this stand out on the water.

• Use a 1mm or less foam strip tied in from underneath to create a 'life jacket' that makes for a very buoyant fly. Great for hopper patterns and emerger/cripples.

• Tie the hair facing backwards and trim the butts at an angle to create cripple/emerger wings.

• Using CDC instead of traditional hackle can create a deadly fly akin to a CDC X-caddis.

• Use EP fibers/Antron/wool yarn to create very sculpted wing using this exact technique.

• Add a wing case and split the hair wing prior to hackle to create a divided wing. This creates really unique variations for duns and spinners.

• So many more….