

The AuSable Wulff

By Todd A Schotts

With Trout season just around the corner, insects will be hatching in the waterways, the rivers will be coming alive, and what else should we tie but a fly that is considered one of the “Top 10 of Trout Flies” by *Field and Stream* - the “Ausable Wulff” from the master and world class tyer, the late Fran Betters.

Quite a few years back, I got the honor to meet Fran Betters at his shop, Adirondack Sports Shop in Wilmington. I was so intrigued by his insight on flies, fishing, and how as a tyer to look at the world of insects. His shop was unique. The day I stopped in, he was behind the vise tying none other than the “Ausable Wulff.” I walked over and started talking to him, the next thing you know, three hours went by. I was so intrigued by his tying. It was a game of 20 questions for me as I was still a rookie to the world of fly tying. After that meeting, I was a true fan of his tying.

He is a world class tyer that could tie the toughest Classic Atlantic Salmon flies to the most unique Trout Flies. His series of flies, like the “Haystack” or the “Wulff” series are simple flies, but are some of the most

effective patterns out there. That is one thing I picked up from him, very simple flies can be very effective.

He started fly fishing started with his dad at an early age, and he learned tying from his dad’s, friends like Ray Bergman. With world class knowledge being taught at an early age, it’s no wonder in high school he actually designed and came out with the famed “Haystack” series!

In 1961, he designed the AuSable Wulff series of flies (not to be confused with Lee Wulff’s series of Gray Wulff flies). This fly had very basic materials, and the tying itself was so simple, yet durable. Like all Wulff Patterns out there, this fly is a high floating, but durable and easy to see fly for the angler and the fish. It is considered an attractor pattern, but can easily imitate Drakes or even an Isonychia.

Fran developed a reputation in the 1960’s as a spokesman for the West Branch of the AuSable River. He actually carried that torch until his health started failing him.

When fishing the AuSable Wulff fly, or its relatives, you can use it in high water, it’s great for pocket water, or even slack water. The way I was instructed by Mr. Betters was, “You have to use a heavier tippet and cast two or three times, no more than that! And cast to where the fish are or will be. If you cast to where the fish won’t be, the fly won’t work.”

So when you tie this fly and fish it, remember to look up in the sky and thank Fran Betters for the great tribute and legacy he has left to the world of fly tying and fly fishing.

Tight lines and schnazzy flies!

MATERIALS NEEDED:

HOOK: Dry Fly Hook, sizes 10-16

THREAD: Florescent Orange 6/0 or 140

TAIL: Woodchuck Guide Hair

BODY: Rusty Orange Australian Opossum Fur

HACKLE: Cree, Grizzly or Brown hackle

WING: Kip Tail or Calf Body Hair

