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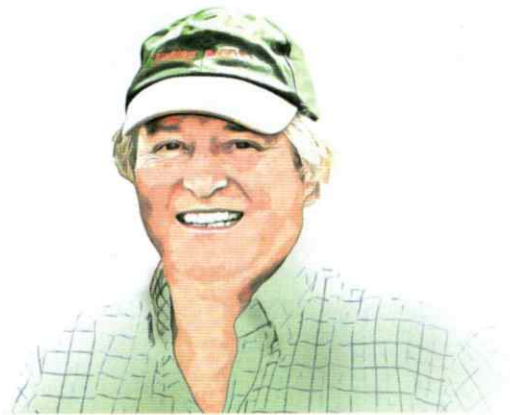
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FAMOUS FIVE

Simon Cooper reveals our favourite trout patterns



WHAT IS THE GOAT FOR US fluff-chuckers? The Greatest Fly of All Time. I've pondered this for a while. Tried to make up my mind through the prism of the ages, balancing the modern against the traditional. The esoteric against the mundane. The famous against the obscure.

In the end, I came up with a list of sorts, but it was only my list; hardly a scientific evaluation of what was popular and effective beyond my own fly-box. So, I threw the question open to all-comers and you responded in your hundreds with nominations. I was careful to be non-specific. It didn't matter what species the fly caught or what kind of fly you fished. It was simply Your Greatest.

The list of responses was collated to determine a list of flies with the greatest number of nominations to go forward to a final vote. But, before we get there, a few that didn't make it. No Grey Wulff or any from the Lee Wulff stable. Of the Blue Winged Olive barely a mention. The Daddy Long Legs was on the cusp. The Willie Gunn was the overwhelming choice for salmon. I was told by some Dutch friends the Red Tag would win a continental poll, but not so here.

In the end, the top five chose themselves, three dry-flies and two nymphs, there being a big gulf between no.5 and no.6 in the list of nominations. You probably will not be overly surprised by the flies that went to the vote, but I suspect you might be surprised by the final winner. In alphabetical order the nominations were:

Adams: Invented in the USA by Leonard Halladay, it takes its name from Charles E Adams, who fished it with great success on the Boardman River in Michigan on the evening of the day in 1922 when Halladay first tied it. It has a host of variants, the most popular being the Parachute, imitating a small or medium-sized dun.

Gold Ribbed Hare's Ear: This nymph doesn't make it on to the list for its looks – it is a mess of a fly but deadly when fished in the surface film. Its origin is unknown, but it is thought to be over 500 years old. Halford relied on it heavily in his prime years at Mottisfont Abbey on the River Test, around 1885-90.

Greenwell's Glory: Another fly invented by one but named after another, in this case the former being James Wright and the latter Canon William Greenwell in May 1854. This olive dun imitation has rather fallen out of fashion in recent years, but it still has a cohort of aficionados.

Klinkhåmer: This is the only fly whose creator is alive today, namely Dutch tyer Hans van Klinken, who invented the fly (originally called the LT Caddis) in 1984. The secret of his Klinkhåmer Special is a large, curved hook with an extra bend behind the thorax.

Pheasant Tail Nymph: The original comprises cock pheasant tail feather fibres and very fine red copper wire. It was created by Wiltshire Avon riverkeeper Frank Sawyer around the 1940s when he observed that a dry Pheasant Tail Red Spinner attracted fish when bedraggled and sinking. Like others on this list, it has inspired many variants, but the original remains the fly to deceive trout eating any small nymphs.

When the thousand-plus votes were counted in early February, one fly stood out from all others – the Klinkhåmer is assuredly your choice as The Greatest Fly of All Time.

1) Klinkhåmer – 39.8%. 2) Pheasant Tail Nymph, 21.6%. 3) Gold Ribbed Hare's Ear, 15.9%. 4) Adams, 15.6%. 5) Greenwell's Glory, 7.1%. ■

Simon Cooper is managing director of Fishing Breaks, the leading chalkstream fishing specialists. He is author of Life of a Chalkstream and The Otters' Tale. Follow his fortnightly blog on saving our rivers at fishingbreaks.co.uk