

The Spider Manifesto

Spiders (or Soft Hackle flies) are one of the most popular flies used in rivers today, and for good reason. They are very easy to fish and a really effective method at the beginning of the trout season!

Usually fished in a team of either 2 or 3, and sometimes even 4. They are a great searching technique, especially in the early season when the rivers can be higher than normal and there are no obvious hatches.

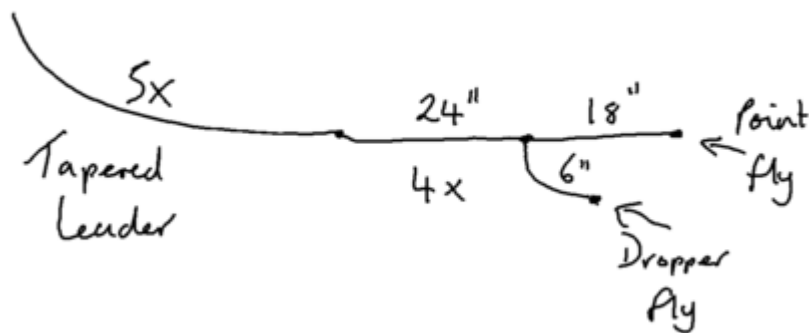
Tackle Setup

An ideal tackle setup for spider fishing is:

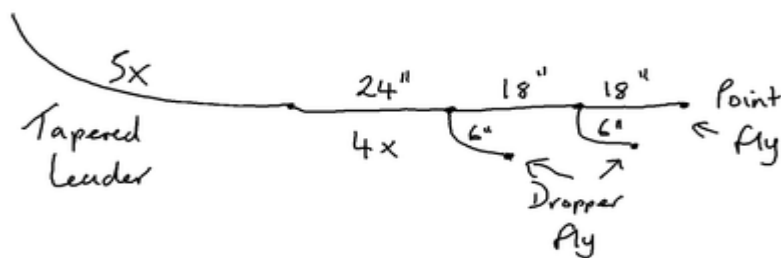
- Rod: 10' 4wt with a soft tip is a good starter setup
- Fly Line: Any 4wt fly line will do, but one with a long taper is ideal
- Leader: A 9' to 12' tapered leader (4X or 5X). Make sure it is well de-greased so it sinks easily.
- Leader Configuration: Typically start with a 2 fly leader which is around 5' long in total. This should consist of 2' to 3' tippet to your first dropper (6 inches long) and then a further 18" to 36" to the point fly, see below.
- Use a small spider on the dropper and a larger spider/bead-head spider as the point fly.
- When fishing at close quarters use a furred leader for better turnover

Some typical leader setups are shown below

2 Fly Leader Configuration



3 Fly Leader Configuration



Techniques

Across and Down

The most common way to start fishing a team of spiders is to employ the “Across and Down” approach. Here’s a few tips:

- Start at the head of the pool/riffle you want to fish
- Cast at 45 degrees across the flow
- Let the river flow move your flies downstream and then let them swing across the flow
- Keep your rod at 45 degrees to the water so there is a slight sag in the line (allows better take detection and more hook ups)
- At the end of the swing across the current, wait a few seconds and then pull a couple of feet back in. This often induces a take so be ready!
- Step down the river and repeat the above steps

The Across and Down method is great for searching water, and is also a great way to start Spider fishing.

Upstream

Fish spiders upstream, just as you would a nymph. Picking likely fish holding pocket and casting to them, raising your rod tip as the flies drift back towards you. This is a quick fishing method as your drifts are generally very short. This is an ideal time to use a Furled Leader, as the enhanced turnover will allow your flies to enter the water already aligned and gives you the ability to detect takes almost immediately.

Further Reading

If the above has piqued your interest in Spider fishing, there are lots more resources available from people a lot more expert than us, we can heartily recommend Robert Smith’s book - The North Country Fly.

