

Bill Peabody's Flat-Wing Patterns

Five Variations on a Familiar Theme

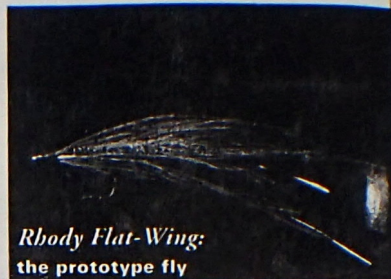
WRITTEN AND
PHOTOGRAPHED BY
BILL PEABODY

ONE SUMMER MORNING I was fishing in the middle of a bluefish blitz just north of Newport Harbor. The fish had sounded momentarily and I made a cast in the direction of the last break. My fly, a 7-inch flat-wing pattern, was left to drift in the current as I scanned the water for the next breaking fish.

Judith in search of more "fat alberts." As we approached the breakwater known as the Harbor of Refuge at Point Judith, it looked as if all hell was breaking loose. Albacore were tormenting balled-up pods of rainfish and bay anchovies. Several boats already were stationed among the numerous schools of charging albacore, and we quickly joined in.

Mike started fishing an epoxy minnow while I began casting a new 5-inch flat-wing pattern named the Polish Joe that imitated a blueback herring. Despite the ferocity of their attacks on the baitfish, most of the albacore ignored artificials and the fishing was surprisingly tough, but the flat-wing did account for a pair of "albies" weighing about 10 pounds each.

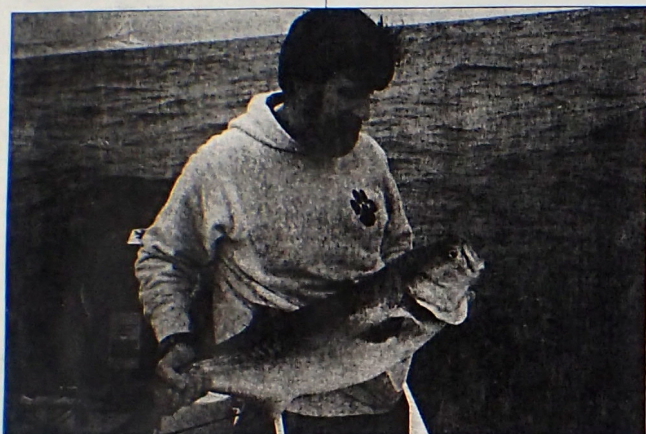
The next month I took a



Rhody Flat-Wing:
the prototype fly

again with another 50 yards of backing. My 10-weight eventually stopped the fish a second time, but then it turned and headed for deep water. I stopped it a third time and felt it shake once before the 15-pound-test tippet parted. I had plenty of time to wonder how large that fish was while I reeled in more than 150 yards of backing and line. Later, I took an 18-pound fish that fought nearly as hard as the one I'd lost earlier.

My flat-wing patterns, five of which are described here, evolved from the Rhody Flat-Wing (shown above), which itself was derived from a pattern given me by J. Kenney Abrames, originator of the flat-wing tie as we know it. One pattern, the *Flat-Wing Bay Smelt*, took numerous double-digit bass in Newport Harbor last summer, topped by a 19-pounder. The *Flat-Wing Harbor Mackerel* and the *Flat-Wing Polish Joe* also are reliable on stripers, blues, and albacore. The *Flat-Wing Dr. Sam* is a fly I fish with confidence in all situations. These four patterns are tied with numerous saddle hackles on short-shank cadmium or stainless-steel hooks, like the



Peabody photo: ARMAND J. COURCHAINE

William Bailey
"Bill" Peabody, widely known as a gentleman angler and skilled fly tier, wrote this article while battling cancer—a battle sadly lost last September. We are honored to publish the article as a tribute to Bill and to help assure his contributions to the art of saltwater fly tying are preserved.

—The Editors

Suddenly the line went tight and I struck sideways into what felt like a school striper. I stripped once or twice and felt a strong surge, as if a big bluefish had made off with the striper. Sixty yards of line and backing disappeared in seconds and much to my surprise a gleaming, iridescent blue-green false albacore jumped at the end of the run. It made another dash of 30 yards or so before I pumped and reeled it to the boat.

So much for the small-fly/fast-retrieve method of fishing I'd heard touted for these fish!

Later, in September, I joined Capt. Mike Kenfield aboard his 20-foot Hewes for a run from Newport to Point



box of flat-wing striper flies on a trip to Harkers Island, North Carolina, but on the first day Bill Levin outfished me with a pair of 12-pound fish taken on Clouser Minnows. Next morning I was casting a 7-inch Flat-Wing Bay Smelt just outside Lookout Bight when I hooked a fish that ran off with my fly line and more than 60 yards of backing. When the fish stopped I was able to gain a couple of turns of line before it took off

Wright-McGill 254SS. When they are dressed with the tie-in point opposite the hook point, the saddle hackles become integrated with the bucktail, creating the "flat-wing" effect.

The fifth pattern, the *Flat-Wing Pilchard*, is tied on a Tiemco 8089NP light-wire hook for fishing with very light tippers.

All five patterns are tied with ultra-fine mono thread, using white bucktail for the skirt and pearl Bodi-Braid for the body.

Here's how to tie them:

THE FLAT-WING BAY SMELT:

1. Capture the tying thread and bring it to the tie-in point, which is directly above the hook point on a Wright-McGill 254SS hook.

2. Tie in a small amount of white bucktail and press it with your thumb to make it surround the hook shank and form the skirt. The hair should generally be 1½ times the hook length.

3. To fashion the tail, tie in long white bucktail on top of the hook shank. Then tie in two strips each of yellow-, red-, and blue-dyed pearl Flashabou and three strips of silver Flashabou. The Flashabou strands should be slightly longer than the bucktail and staggered in length. Add a pair of 1½-inch-long shrimp-pink spade hackles, one on each side of the tail. Then stack saddle hackles, beginning with a pale yellow feather about two thirds as long as the bucktail, adding two salmon-pink feathers slightly longer, and finally two olive feathers slightly longer than the pink but no longer than the white bucktail.

4. Make the body by

The Flat-Wing Bay Smelt



wrapping pearl Bodi-Braid to a point behind the eye, leaving adequate room for wing materials and a neat head.

5. Make a throat of short white bucktail reaching just beyond the bend of the hook. The bucktail should be pressed around the hook to cover the bottom half of the shank.

6. Tie in a modest amount of long white bucktail for the wing. Press the bucktail down with your thumb, spreading it over the top half the hook (the throat and the first part of the wing form a collar). Then tie in three or four strands each of soft pink and hot pink Krystal Flash on each side, staggering the ends to match the length of the yellow saddle hackle in the tail. Next tie in clumps of olive and jade-green bucktail. Optional: Add a peacock herl to each side of the fly as a lateral line.

7. Apply silver prismatic eyes to each side of the head and carefully wrap with a few turns of mono thread. The thread will hold the eyes tight to the head. Apply two coats of lacquer over the eyes to complete the fly.

THE FLAT-WING HARBOR MACKEREL:

1. Capture the tying thread and bring it to the tie-in point, again directly above the hook point.

2. Tie in a small amount of white bucktail for the skirt,



Proof that albacore will take flat-wing flies. This one hit a Flat-Wing Bay Smelt.

as in the pattern above.

3. Tie in a generous amount of long, soft white bucktail to start the tail. I use more bucktail for this pattern than any of the other flat-wings. Add six to eight strands of pearl Flashabou to each side of the tail, allowing it to extend slightly beyond the bucktail. Then stack one white saddle, one blue saddle, one green saddle, and one green-dyed grizzly feather (either from a neck, spade, or trimming). The latter should,

if possible, be about half the length of the saddle feather beneath it. Tie these in so all the feathers lay flat.

4. Wrap the body with pearl Bodi-Braid.

5. Fashion a throat from white marabou tip (bucktail optional).

6. Make the wing from a green-dyed grizzly spade feather positioned on top of a slightly longer blue-dyed grizzly spade, the latter extending slightly beyond the hook bend. These spade hackles are

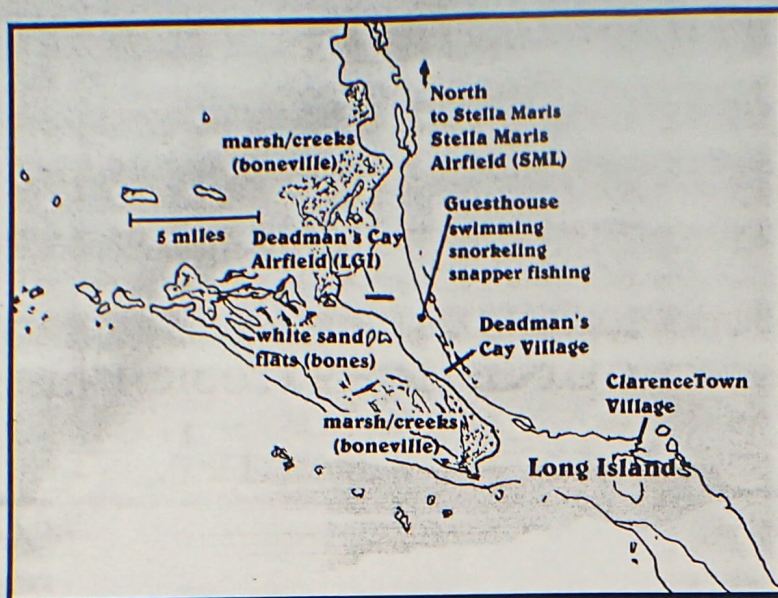
tied flat and create a barred effect on the top of the fly.

7. Secure small prismatic silver eyes with black pupils to the head with a couple of wraps of mono thread and lacquer twice.

The Flat-Wing Harbor Mackerel



Deadman's Cay, Long Island, Bahamas



This large system of white-sand lagoon flats, creeks, marshes, backcountry, and channels offers superb fishing for bonefish, barracuda, snapper, jacks, and occasional tarpon. The Deadman's Cay lagoon is Bonefish Grand Central on Long Island - far more extensive habitat than the resort areas on the north end of the island. Stay at a small guesthouse in Deadman's Cay village, which has brand-new suites overlooking the blue atlantic, private baths, a/c, kitchenettes, and dining room/bar. This is a budget-priced fishing vacation, but the fishing is first-rate. The guides are equipped with modern shallow-draft skiffs, know the local fishing, and are eager to work. The best flats start less than a mile away from the landing, and are probably the nicest wading you'll ever see - flat, white, packed sand. Fast fishing is common here; ten bonefish in three hours is not unusual. The area is well protected from weather, and offers above average opportunities in inclement conditions. Like to fish without a guide? Ask about a partially self-guided option. Full week guided packages \$1,410 (seven nights; 6 day guided; dbl occupancy). This and other low-occupancy fishing vacations are available from:

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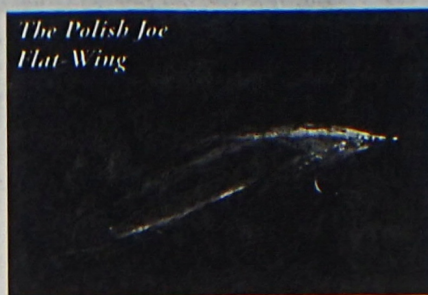
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FLY TIER'S BENCH

*The Polish Joe
Flat-Wing*



THE POLISH JOE FLAT-WING (BLUEBACK HERRING):

1. Tying steps for the skirt, body, and collar are the same as those for the Flat-Wing Bay Smelt.

2. Select long white bucktail and secure it to hook to start the tail. On each side add six strands of pearl Flashabou, three or four strands of pearl Flashabou dyed blue, and three or four strands of pearl Flashabou dyed olive. Also add a strand of pearl Bodi-Braid dyed gray and picked out on each side. Then add a white saddle hackle feather topped by light olive, light



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gray, and light blue saddle feathers.

3. To build the wing, tie in a length of long white bucktail, add light gray and medium blue bucktail, then on each side add a single strand of pearl Bodi-Braid dyed gray and picked out.

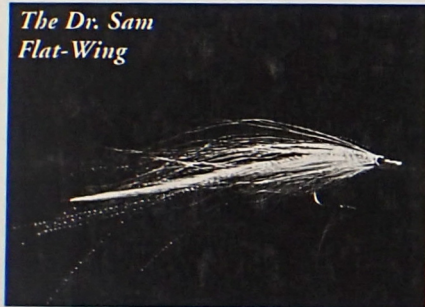
4. Add small black or silver prismatic eyes and lacquer twice.

The Polish Joe is named in memory of Joe Jablonski, a friend since boyhood with whom I fished, hunted, drank beer, and chased girls. Joe found the right girl and I was an usher at their wedding. He loved his family first, then fishing. He passed away just four days after his 50th birthday.

THE DR. SAM FLAT-WING:

The materials and tying steps used in this pattern are the same as for the Flat-Wing Bay Smelt, except the tail is of white bucktail, white saddle hackle, and

*The Dr. Sam
Flat-Wing*



pearl Flashabou and the wing is white bucktail, light pink and dark pink Krystal Flash, with a strand of peacock herl on either side.

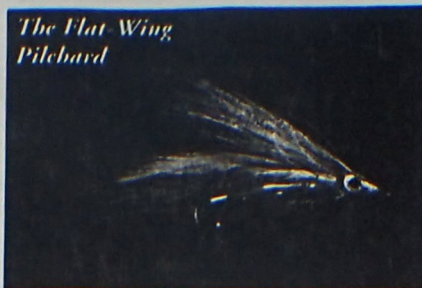
The Dr. Sam is a "generic" pattern that can be modified to suit the tier's whim. After calling it an All-White for many years, I renamed it for my good friend, Dr. S. T. Sambandam, who recently supported me through immunotherapy treatment for cancer. Such a kind, compassionate man deserves to have a fly named after him.

THE FLAT-WING PILCHARD:

This pattern uses a Tiemco 8089 or 8089N hook, or you can use the stainless-steel hook of your choice.

1. Wrap tying thread to a point

*The Flat-Wing
Pilchard*



halfway between the eye and the point of the hook.

2. Fashion the skirt by tying in a modest amount of white bucktail and pressing it with your thumb to make it surround the hook shank. The bucktail should extend no more than the shank length beyond the bend of the hook.

3. Build the tail by tying in a white saddle hackle, then add a gray saddle hackle. Both should be the same length as the bucktail.

4. Tie in two strips of pearl Bodi-Braid along the bottom of the hook shank, letting them trail to the rear; this forms the fly's belly. Next secure two more strands of Bodi-Braid to the hook shank so their tag ends also trail to the rear, then wind the rest forward along the shank to a point halfway to the hook eye and tie off; this forms the body. What's left of the two strands should then be tied back so they trail rearward; these form the fly's throat. Pick out the braid and trim to the shape of the pilchard's bottom half.

5. To make the wing, start with white bucktail, add two or three lengths of pearl Bodi-Braid dyed gray and picked out, then add a length of light blue bucktail. The wing should be slightly shorter than the tail.

6. Add size 2½ silver prismatic eyes with black pupils and apply a modest amount of epoxy to the head, drawing it back slightly into the wing and throat. Before the epoxy cures completely, adjust the wing and throat to create a flat-sided imitation.

This pattern was developed for Ron Mazzerella, who stalks record fish using tippets as light as 2-pound-test. I have also tied it in longer lengths by extending the tail and wing. It is also tied on regular-wire stainless-steel hooks for standard saltwater fishing.



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