



### **Crane Fly aka Daddy Longlegs**

*Fishing "The Daddy" has been a long held tradition in the UK, either with imitations or with the real thing stuck on a hook and fished on the dap with a blow line, either way it is a good mouthful for a trout and easily recognizable to the fish.*

The Daddy longlegs or crane fly has been imitated for almost as long as fly fishing has been around, it is such an obvious thing to imitate and on some waters of the Northern hemisphere these insects appear in such numbers in autumn that they will bring even the largest fish up to the top to feed. Trout being both opportunistic and pretty smart when it comes to gathering food recognize that the crane fly is an even worse swimmer than it is a flier and many that get blown over the waters of a lake only end up crash landing and providing the fish with an easy and hearty meal.

Instantly recognizable with its ungainly fluttering and long trailing legs it is a simple if sometimes monotonous pattern to imitate. Some anglers produce patterns with extended deer hair bodies for extra floatation and some decline to waste the time to tie in the "knees" of the legs, but it is such a fun pattern to make that the extra effort taken in putting knots in the legs seems worthwhile and if you had both versions in your box confidence would dictate that you used the knotted version first, it just looks that much nicer.

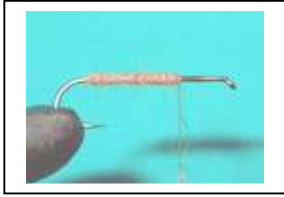
At the Commonwealth Fly Fishing Championships, the still water leg of which was fished on Lynn Brenig, an intimidatingly large piece of water there had been much talk of the Daddys showing up but for the most part they failed to materialize in any great numbers and the fish didn't seem to be taking much note of the ones that did. However on the first competition session and on something of a whim I fished this pattern sunk in the scum lines along the windward bank and drilled five fish in hardly as many casts. Although a large insect, once they hit the water they are tricky to see and it seemed as though there were actually quite a few just in or under the film.

As a variation it is also well worth throwing this fly into the odd stream and it is sure to drum up some fish. At a push it makes a fair imitation of dragon and damselfly adults as well and well worth carrying a few. Finally this is one pattern which will allow you to get away with a bit of skating drag now and then, the naturals skitter across the surface trailing their legs on the water and such a tactic can occasionally illicit an explosive response from the fish.

#### **A word on tying the pattern:**

The only tricky thing during the tying is knotting the legs, it is best that you select the longest pheasant tail fibres you can find, simply as this makes matters a whole lot easier. There are various means of tying an overhand knot in the fibres but I find it easiest to use either a crochet needle or a pair of fine tweezers to pull the end through the loop as you form the knot. Even a leather man tool or your trusty forceps will do at a push.

Tie up six double knotted pheasant tail legs before you start tying the fly and take care not to sneeze or you will be tying another half dozen.



Place a long shank #12 or even #10 hook in the vice and attach the thread just behind the eye. Make touching turns all the way to the bend stopping just short of the point where the shank bends downwards. Crane flies have no tails so you can proceed straight to tying in the dubbing body. Dub on a thin layer of tan or orange/tan dubbing. Making a small ball at the rear to imitate the actual shape of the natural's abdomen.



Now tie in the wings, two matched dun hackle point wings mounted flat and with a few figure eight wraps between them to set the wings in a nice "V" or "delta" shape.



Directly in front of the wings tie in the legs that you have pre\_prepared, three on either side of the wings, trailing backwards and under the hook. The legs can be quite long, even longer than the natural if required. The trailing legs are an obvious feature of the natural and they seem to be a key trigger to inducing the fish to take the pattern.



Tie in two good quality brown or dun cock hackles and add a small amount more dubbing taking this to just short of the eye of the hook to form a slightly thickened thorax area.

Then wind the first hackle forwards to just behind the eye and tie off.

Repeat with the second hackle forming a neat stiff hackle collar, this will assist the fly in skittering across the surface when fished actively.



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Whip finish behind the eye, add a tiny drop of head cement to the whip finish and you are ready to go fishing. The finished fly here is tied on a long shank hook but it is possible to tie on a normal dry fly hook, nymph hook (for submerged patterns) and even an extended body version should you so wish.



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Fly tied and designed by Tim Rolston