

**PHEASANT**

# **Feathers**

## **1. Introduction**

Today, most pheasant feathers belong to the rare and unusual fly tying materials and are much sought after by many fishermen all over the world, interested in creating their own artificial fishing flies. A century ago, such exotic feathers, which were coveted for fashion more than for flies, could easily be obtained from wildlife importers of freshly wild-taken specimens from Asia and other parts of the world.

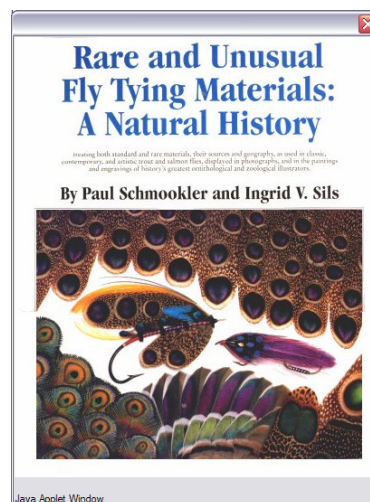
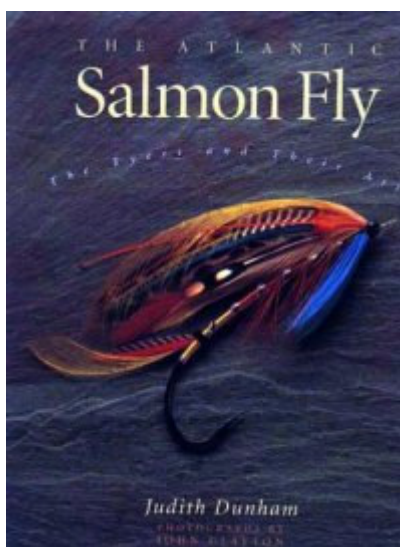
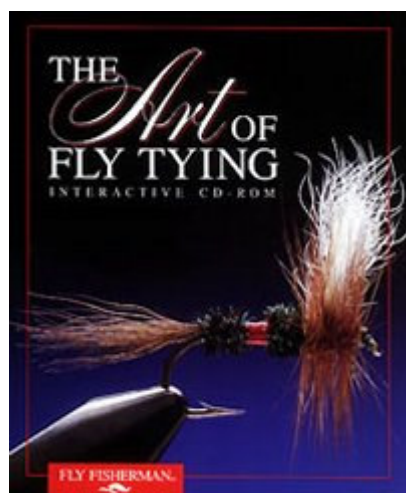
A very different climate faces the fly tier of today - an era of shrinking natural resources, of vanishing habitats and disappearing species and new legislation's, such a CITES. Happily, fly tiers can conveniently, and in good conscience, obtain such common materials or by-products as the chicken hackle, duck and goose feathers that he needs for trout, bass and saltwater flies. Many fly tiers have made ingenious use of modern synthetic materials.

For the Atlantic salmon fly tiers, however, wanting to copy or emulate the fly designs of the past, the rarity that contributes to the appeal of these exotic feathers is the very obstacle to procuring them. Atlantic salmon fly tiers have a number of choices in addition to the legal purchase of imported materials from exotic species. Feathers dropped from birds in aviaries, zoos and and pet shops are sometimes available, and very effective alternates have been made dyeing common feathers to simulate the more exotic ones.

## **2. Salmon flies and their unusual feathers are more popular then ever before**

Today, there is the great appeal of re-creating an artistic salmon fly pattern from the past and the desire to procure the same materials used by the early fly dressers are intrinsic to the nostalgia and romanticism that pervade the whole sport of "fly fishing and fly ting". The fly tying community acknowledges that the recent publications of books dealing with the art of fly typing and fishing has created a monster in the form of lust for the original materials (rare pheasant and other rare birds feathers) all over the world, especially in north America, Europe, Australia and Japan. Books that have contributed to this phenomenon are as follows (there are also others) :

1. "Salmon Flies, Their Character, Style and Dressing", written by Mr. Poul Jorgensen and published by Stackpole Books, U.S.A. in 1978,
2. "The Atlantic Salmon Fly" by Mrs. Judith Dunham and published by Chronicle Books, San Francisco, U.S.A. in 1991
3. "Rare and Unusual Fly Tying Materials : a Natural History" by Mr. Paul Schmookler and Mrs. Ingrid Sils, published by the Complete Sportsman, Millis, Masschusetts, U.S.A. in 1994,



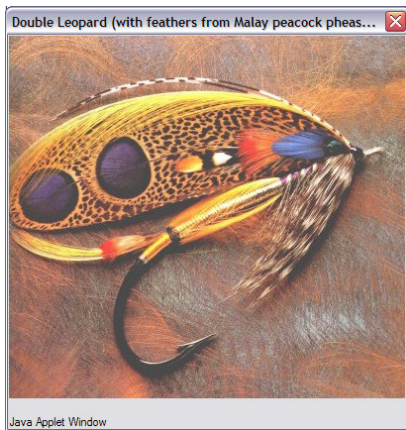
This renewed interest in classic Atlantic salmon flies has generated a large group of people all over the world for whom a fly is just an other piece of artwork to hang on the wall, and how it's created, doesn't matter as long as they get it. As a result, illegal and immoral markets have been created for such exotic feathers, both in Asia as in the West as well, and these will prosper as long as the demand for these Victorian Salmon flies is not getting saturated by the supply of the row materials (exotic and unusual feathers).

There are numerous violations of CITES and other laws protecting such specimens (feathers and skins) both in Asia as the West as well. The truth, however, is that most illegal traffickers just mail these rare and row materials in from Asia to their final destinations, where-ever they are. Therefore, the illicit traffic is hard to control and to quantify. Fact is that this traffic has a considerable bearing on some wild populations of pheasants and other birds.

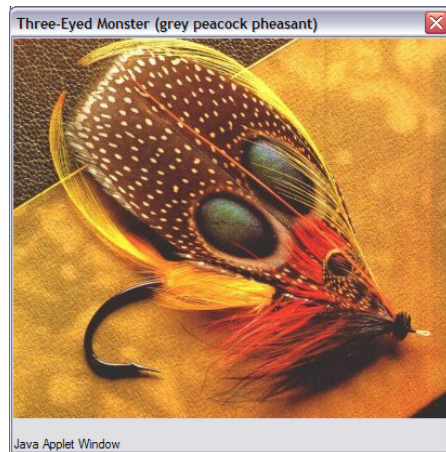
### **3. Almost any exotic feather that one possesses and/or sells may be illegal or legal**

Under the present state of affairs the demand for feathers of rare pheasants, is overwhelming the supply of such wild and/or captive-bred specimen produced by aviculturists.

Peacock pheasant body feathers for instance were historically never used in salmon fly dressings until 1981 when the "Double Leopard" with feathers from the Malay peacock pheasant (*Polyplectron malacence*) was created and made popular via the above mentioned publications. Since feathers of this rare male peacock pheasant are so hard to procure, some fly dressers revealed that feathers from other related peacock pheasants were available from aviculturists around the world. Today, body and tail feathers from the Grey peacock pheasant (*Polyplectron bicalcaratum*) and Palawan (*Polyplectron emphanum*) are most popular and are used extensively in artistic salmon flies.



Double Leopard (with feather from Malay pheasant and grey junglecock)



Three-Eyed Monster (grey peacock pheasant)

Of all of the feathers used by the fly dresser, the most recognizable come from the grey junglefowl (*Gallus sonnerathi*) because of its spectacular neck feathers. The curiously bright horny spangles of the neck feathers and wing-coverts are a very special feature of the grey cock, but as they are greatly prized for making artificial flies used in trout fishing, these ornaments also have caused the destruction of many birds in India, their native country. There is a "0" export quota imposed by the Govt. of India for grey cocks (death or alive specimens) but still there are Indian dealers offering jungle cock capes for sale. Some junglefowl are now being raised in the U.S.A. and in UK, and are made legally available at high prices. These are shipped under special permit but a whole lot is still being smuggled into the West from India.



Cape of grey junglefowl(*Gallus sonnerathi*)



3 artistic Salmon flies designed with neckfeathers from the grey junglefowl(*Gallus sonnerathi*)

Pure-bred Lewis pheasant (*Lophura nycthemera lewisi*), Crawford's kaleedge pheasant (*Lophura leucomelana crawfurdi*) and lineated kaleedge pheasant (*Lophura leucomelana lineata*) are all known now under the name "Anderson's pheasant" or even more ludicrous "Zebra pheasant" in the fly tying community, because their markings on each feather are white on black, instead of black on white, as for instance in the true silver pheasant (*L. nycthemera*). One special fly was designed with the name "Abuse's special", which is in fact a streamer fly, with feathers from the first 3 mentioned species to create a fly, which is more



prominently marked as one being made from just the true silver. All three pheasant species are native to Thailand, which has imposed a total export ban for these taxa. Since fly tiers have become to know that we are keeping and breeding these species in fairly good numbers in Belgium, we have never known such an interest for our birds.

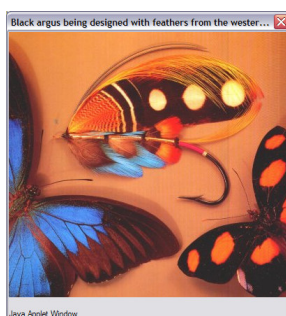


unusual pheasant feathers  
(Lewis, Lineated and Crawford's Kaleedge)

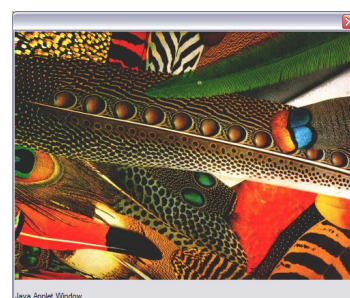


Ausie's Special  
(Lewis, Lineated & Crawford's kaleedge pheasant)

An other favorite among fly tiers is the well-known argus pheasant (*Argusianus argus*) which is now becoming more and more available in captivity, due to recent successes with the captive breeding of this species, especially in western Europe. Wing and tail feathers of this species, which are under CITES, are collected in captivity each year and are sold to fly tiers, who are willing to pay a good price for these specimens. We believe that aviculturists are able to extent a helping hand to the fly tiers of today by collecting these "unusual" pheasant feathers for them. Each feather, legally collected in captivity, is one less "illegally" taken from the wild. Therefore, we make an appeal to all aviculturists to collect your feathers and to sell or to give them for free to the community of fly tiers. By doing this, we lower the human pressure on the species in the wild and hence contribute to the well-being of the species in its native habitat.



black argus being designed with feathers  
from the western tragopan (*Tragopan melanocephalus*)



Unusual pheasant feathers  
(argus, peacock, grey junglefow, and others)

#### 4. Pheasant feathers of interest to the fly tier

We hereby give an overview of the species which are important for the design of artistic salmon flies according to Schmookler (1994) : western tragopan (*Tragopan*

melanocephalus), satyr tragopan (*Tragopan satyra*), monal pheasant (*Lophophorus impeianus*), blue eared pheasant (*Crossoptilon auritum*), silver pheasant (*Lophura nycthemera*), Lewis Ph. (*L.n.lewisi*), red junglefowl (*Gallus gallus*), Ceylon junglefowl (*Gallus lafayetti*), grey junglefowl (*Gallus sonnerathi*), green junglefowl (*Gallus varius*), true pheasant (*Phasianus colchicus*), Reeve's pheasant (*Syrnaticus reveesi*), golden pheasant (*Chrysolophus pictus*), Lady Amherst Ph. (*Chrysolophus amherstiae*), hybrid golden/amherst, grey peacock pheasant (*Polyplectron bicalcaratum*), Malay peacock pheasant (*Polyplectron malacence*), great argus (*Argusianus argus*), Indian Peafowl (*Pavo cristatus*), green peafowl (*Pavo muticus*) and others.



Pheasant feathers of interest for fly tying

top row : Ijima's copper pheasant (*Syrnaticus soemmerringi ijimae*) (south east Japan), Malay Crestless Fireback (*Lophura erythrophthalma*) (Malay Peninsula), Tibetan white eared pheasant (*Crossoptilon crossoptilon drouyni*) (Tibet), brown eared pheasant (*Crossoptilon mantchuricum*) (western China) and Cabot's tragopan (*Tragopan caboti*) (eastern China)

middle row : Congo peacock (*Afropavo congensis*) (central Africa), bronze-tailed peacock pheasant (*Polyplectron chalcurum*) (Sumatra), Rothschild's peacock pheasant (*Polyplectron inopinatum*) (Malay), Palawan peacock pheasant (*Polyplectron emphanum*) (southwest Philippines), Bornean peacock pheasant (*Polyplectron schleiermacheri*) (Borneo), Chinese monal (*Lophophorus lhuysii*) (central China), and Blyth's Tragopan (*Tragopan blythi*) (Nagaland)

bottom row : blood pheasant (*Ithaginis cruentus*) (Himalayas), Mikado pheasant (Taiwan), Cheer pheasant (*Catreus wallichi*) (Himalayas), Hume's bar-tailed pheasant (*Syrnaticus humiae*) (India/south-west China) and Temminck's tragopan (*Tragopan temminckii*) (India/China)



Pheasant feathers of interest for fly tying

top row : White-Crested Kaleedge (*Lophura leucomelana hamiltoni*) (western Himalayas), Malay crested fireback (*Lophura ignita rufa*) (Malay Peninsula) and Elliot's pheasant (*Syrnaticus ellioti*) (eastern China)

middle row : Nepal Kaleedge (*Lophura l. leucomelana*) (Nepal), koklass pheasant (*Pucrasia macrolopha*) (southern Asia), green pheasant (*Phasianus versicolor*) (Japan) and lineated kaleedge (*Lophura l. lineata*) (Thailand)

bottom row : Siamese fireback (*Lophura diardi*) (Laos/Thailand), Bornean crested fireback (*Lophura ignita nobilis*) (Borneo), Edward's pheasant (*Lophura edwardsi*) (Vietnam)