

The Undertaker – An Atlantic Salmon Wet Fly



Judith Dunham, in her book *The Atlantic Salmon Fly – The Tyers and Their Art*, Chronicle Books, San Francisco, 1991, quotes the late New Brunswick fly tyer Warren Duncan as follows:

“Anybody can develop a fly pattern. Standards have been around for a long time and they are hard to improve, but I thought if I ever invented a fly, I would call it the Undertaker. I came up with

the Undertaker in 1979. My friend Chris Russell was fishing the Nashwaak, without success. He saw a chap upriver who landed a fish and lost it, then landed another fish. As the man fished, he broke off the point of the hook on a backcast. Chris saw him change flies, drop the damaged fly, then continue fishing. When the man left, Chris picked up the fly and brought it home. We couldn't find anything like it in the fly tying books, so I started playing with the pattern. I didn't like the black wool in the body and substituted peacock herl. I used gold for the rib because the Rats use gold and I love the Rat series of flies. I tied up three or four Undertakers in size 2 and 4 doubles. The first time I used it, on the Hammond River, I caught a twenty-four-pound salmon. Then Chris used it on the Kedgwick and got a thirty-eight-pound salmon. Bill Hunter put it in his catalog. The next year it was in the Orvis catalog, then in L.L. Bean's. All of a sudden the Undertaker was a fly.”

Warren Duncan had a fly shop in Saint John, New Brunswick, named Dunc's Fly Shop. He was Dunc to his friends. He once told me that if jungle cock “eyes” were included, the fly was called a Sighted Undertaker, but if not, it was a Blind Undertaker. I've always liked jungle cock sides on a dark fly because they show up so well.

The fly produced many salmon for me over the years and I've always found it great for fall fishing, in size 2 or 4. Our son Donald, at about 13 years of age, landed his first-ever salmon in Bridgeville NS on an Undertaker tied by him. One summer, Pictou



County angler Parker Wong's success with the Undertaker on the St. Mary's River created a strong demand for Undertakers in a local fly shop. It's a great fly.

The Undertaker in our photo was tied by Dunc.

Warren (Dunc) Duncan, 1948-2007

The Undertaker

- Thread: UTC G.S.P. 50 Denier black thread
- Hook: Partridge Bartleet Supreme or Daiichi 2161, size 12 - 1
- Tag: Gold flat tinsel, fluorescent green floss, and then fluorescent red floss
- Tail: None
- Rib: Gold Sparkle Braid
- Body: Peacock herl or synthetic herl (Wapsi Pearl Chenille, X-Small, Peacock)
- Hackle: Grizzly hen hackle died black
- Wing: Black bear hair
- Sides: Jungle cock (optional)
- Head: Black thread finished with 2 coats Angler's Corner Clear Wet Head Cement