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Sports

Anatomy of a trout fly: Chung's RS-2 fills the bill
Bob Saile Outdoors

When Rim Chung came to Denver from Seoul, South Korea, in 1968, he had a strong desire to fish for Colorado trout, but only the weakest clues on how to go about it.

"I got acquainted with a guy who was a spin fisherman," Chung said, "and we began to fish together. We didn't catch anything to speak of, though. In 1970, I got disgusted and didn't even bother to buy a license."

Chung, 65, is today recognized as an expert on fishing the South Platte River in the Deckers area and the inventor of one of the more effective fly patterns ever used there - the RS-2 nymph.

The transition from hapless, troutless spin fisherman to accomplished fly fisherman was fueled by eagerness to learn, coupled with creativity applied to the basics of aquatic-insect anatomy.

Back in that frustrating year of 1970, another friend suggested Chung take up fly fishing. ("What the hell is fly fishing?" Chung asked.)

He bought a fly rod and worked at being a dry-fly angler. He began to catch a few trout. Then a friend suggested they go up to Bear Creek in Morrison and do some nymph fishing. ("What the hell is nymph fishing?" Chung asked.) He caught one trout on that trip.

The progression from that point was steady and fairly rapid. Chung, now retired but then the owner of a shop in Cinderella City

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selling Korean imports, began reading about nymph fishing and observing others who were good at it.

"I started developing my own way of nymphing," Chung said. "I taught myself to tie flies and eventually came up with my own pattern."

That pattern was a midge imitation that came to be known as the RS-1. It was like the now-famed RS-2, except that it had only the suggestion of a wing case, as opposed to the RS-2's upright, slightly angled, stubby wing.

RS-2 signifies "Rim's Semblance, No. 2." What Chung had designed - the year was 1974 - was a generic nymph or pupa pattern. It had a configuration suggestive of an emerging insect just beginning to hatch from the stream bottom. It could be the semblance of more than one insect - in small sizes, a mayfly nymph or a midge pupa. In larger ones, it could pass for a stonefly, or if fished in an active manner, even a caddis emerger.

Chung began to catch eight, 10, 12 fish or better per day on the Platte. Eventually, the RS-2 became the only fly pattern Chung used. It remains so to this day. Much of the time, Chung dead-drifts it deep.

"But I take the weight off the leader and fish it at the surface and catch trout when they're rising."

One year, as an experiment, he fished nothing but a No. 16 black RS-2 (he ties it in more than one color, with gray the basic shade) for 10 days in January at Deckers. "I did as well as anybody else," he said.

Chung never has tied flies professionally. But word of his catch-all pattern spread, partly through a fishing friend, Andy Novak, who taught nymph-fishing classes. Two Denver-area shops, Anglers All and The Flyfisher, caught onto the effectiveness of the RS-2 and began to tie it and sell it. It's a mainstay for most South Platte anglers now.

A man who appreciates simplicity, Chung carries only one box of RS-2 patterns in different sizes and colors. In another small pouch, he keeps a few fly leaders. He doesn't need a fly vest. He

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also doesn't use a strike indicator on his leader.

The RS-2 has served him well on other rivers, including the Roaring Fork, the Eagle and streams in Yellowstone.

Here's his RS-2 recipe: The hook is a Tiemco 101 with a straight eye, in sizes 14 to 24. Initially, he used two strands of beaver guard hair for the rather long, split tail, but now uses micro fibers. The body is slenderly dubbed beaver fur, either natural gray or dyed. A pronounced, thicker thorax section is also dubbed beaver fur. The almost upright, short wing is made of a clump of gray, webbed, saddle hackle fibers, trimmed with scissors into a triangle shape.

It's just a semblance of an insect, Chung said.

But it works like the real thing.

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Caption: PHOTO: The Denver Post/Bob Saile FIT TO BE TIED:Rim Chung turns out an RS-2 at his tying desk.

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