



## An Interview with Drew Chicone

Drew, Front Range Anglers appreciates the opportunity to show off a couple of your favorite patterns in the October Newsletter. I've had an opportunity to try the Sanibel Cannibal in Florida this spring and can report that THIS FLY GETS IT DONE! Prior to leaving in June, I tied one for a friend and he immediately began tagging Snook cruising in the surf.....Paul Prentiss

I know you're involved in a wide range of activities surrounding saltwater fly fishing, including a new and very unique book to be published by Stackpole entitled *Feather Brain*. Do you have any idea when it might be released? In addition, your company, Salty Fly Tying, launched a new website dedicated to helping saltwater fly tyers become more proficient. What are your current plans regarding this site?

The publisher is working with the final draft, and we hope to announce the publication date soon. I will put updates on [Salty Fly Tying](#) and my [Facebook Page](#), so stay tuned.

A frustration of mine is trying to learn a new pattern or tying technique without clear illustrations or instructions. I subscribe to all kinds of fly tying magazines and have quite a few fly tying books, and I can't tell you how many times I wish there was one more photo or I could have zoomed in on a picture. I think that most of us would appreciate more than 5 or 6 1-inch photos to thoroughly explain how to get from point A to point Z. As such, I have made it a point to incorporate ultra close up shots, hi res photography, and a large range of photos to illuminate the ideas and techniques found in my eBooks and on my web site.

My goal for Salty Fly Tying is to create a vehicle for sharing ideas on saltwater pattern development as well as a clear, easy to follow educational resource for tyers of every skill level. There is no shortage of "How To's" available out there, but they all seem to focus on learning to tie a particular fly for a particular fishing situation. I want to dive much deeper than "how to tie this pattern or that pattern." My focus is really directed toward developing new saltwater fly patterns, and learning how to correct or improve the flies that just don't seem to act right in the water.

The aim is to teach fly tyers how to effectively mimic the shape, size, color, and specific movements of saltwater prey and learn which materials will best achieve these results. Knowing how to select the right materials and learning proper tying techniques is key to creating productive saltwater flies.

## Where do you think most beginners and intermediate tyers get off-track in their approach to saltwater fly tying?

Probably the most common question that I hear in my fly tying classes is "what do you think of this fly?" Teaching fly tying is very rewarding for me because I can watch the students evolve from technicians to artists. It doesn't take more than a couple of classes and a little practice before their interests change from "How do I tie that fly?" to "Check out this new fly I invented!" Almost every time I teach a beginners class, one of my younger students will hand me his or her new pattern and ask me what I think of it. I carefully look their creations over and give them an "attaboy," a few tips or pointers on technique, and then I ask them "What's it supposed to do?" This is usually followed by one of two responses, "look cool" or "catch fish." It never fails. "look cool" is easy, if you like it ... mission accomplished! Lots of people tie flies that are without a doubt works of art by anyone's standards and if you don't expect them to catch fish, I would say you are right on track.

It's the "catch fish" response that takes a little more explaining, and is ultimately the reason for writing my book Feather Brain. I think the point where some fly tyers veer off track is when they become frustrated with their flies that don't catch fish and don't enjoy tying as much as they did or worse...

lose interest. This typically happens at the point where they don't know which fly to choose for a certain situation or they have progressed past assembling materials off a pattern sheet and want to design new patterns. Either way, all they typically need is a little bit of know-how to start catching fish with their own flies.

My objective is to explain and demystify why specific materials and color are used or not used. I encourage tyers to think beyond just shape and color, and learn how to effectively mimic the specific actions of saltwater prey.



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**You have met and interviewed some of the top saltwater fly tyers in the industry. What did you take away from this experience?**

Interviewing such an impressive collection of fly tying innovators was not only an unforgettable pleasure, but very enlightening as well. These individuals have appeared in countless publications and granted interviews to some of the industry's most recognizable magazines.

While a typical magazine interview focuses on the fly and how to fish it, I wanted to explore the thought process of why they chose a given material or technique. Each tyer was more than willing to talk about their historically productive patterns and graciously shared their insight and theories on pattern development. I only asked a few questions, but their feedback was extraordinary and thought provoking.

A few common themes were prevalent in every conversation. The first concept was pattern evolution, meaning the fly that we recognize as their pattern today is very different from earlier permutations. Some were happy accidents that opened their eyes to a new style or technique, but the majority of the

fly started out unlike anything we would recognize to be the iconic fly today. Thousands of casts and years of on-the-water testing, tweaking and sometimes material substitutions were required to achieve the action or attributes they were after.

Another element that was discussed in great detail was the relationship between fishs' strike zone and the fly's drop time. It became very evident that the position and speed in which the fly fell through the water column, and the time it spent in the strike zone were major factors in the pattern development process. A significant amount of time and thought went into selecting the hook and materials in order to convincingly mimic the natural decent of prey in a given situation for a specific species.

Obviously these historically productive patterns have hoodwinked a wide array of species all over the world. But the majority of them were originally designed to target a particular species in a very specific fishing situation. Not surprisingly, each of these master tyers possesses a vast knowledge of the fish they are after and especially their feeding habits. It was only after they had achieved repeated success and established a proven track record that they began fishing the pattern as a utility fly.

## About Drew

Drew Chicone is a fly designer, photographer, author, instructor and materials expert whose passion for the sport has led him to the salty waters of Southwest Florida. He has lived and breathed the sport since he was tall enough to sit at the vise and his life-like creations are both well known and in high demand among Florida guides. His passion lies in developing and tying saltwater flies, and helping fly tiers of anl skill levels learn how to develop and improve their own fly patterns. Drew is a member of the Orvis Contract Tying Team, and his patterns are sold in numerous fly shops and have appeared in several publications and online articles. Recently Drew has partnered with Stackpole Books to publish his latest work *Feather Brain - How to design better saltwater flies*. You can keep up with his latest works on his website [www.saltyflytying.com](http://www.saltyflytying.com).