

SA (Southern Alberta) Hopper



The SA Hopper was developed in the mid-1990s by Roman Scharabun (1952-2005), of St. Albert, Alberta. Roman was a school teacher by profession but was also an extremely innovative and talented fly-tyer who enjoyed designing new and improved fly patterns for southern Alberta's trout streams. Among the patterns he is credited with are the R.S. Quad May series of mayfly imitations and the SA Hopper.

I fished with Roman on several occasions while his yet unnamed hopper pattern was still in its experimental stage. It worked incredibly well on the Crowsnest, Oldman, and Castle rivers, and their trout loved them. Initially, Roman had considered calling his new fly the *Crowsnest Hopper*. Upon discovering its effectiveness on all of the trout streams in this area, another fly-fisher friend of Roman's, Bill Robertson, suggested the name *SA (Southern Alberta) Hopper*. The rest, as they say, is history.

Hook: Tiemco 200R, 2302, or equivalent, size 8-14

Thread: 6/0 – 8/0, fire orange

Tail: Red elk or deer hair

Abdomen: Yellow closed-cell foam (2mm thickness), cut into strip 1/2 – 2/3 width of hook gap. Leave a bit of foam, trimmed to a V-shape, extending over the back of the hook.

Ribbing: Brown hackle

Underwing: 4-6 strands of pearl Crystal Flash

Wing: Elk or deer hair

Thorax: Light to medium-olive synthetic dry-fly dubbing

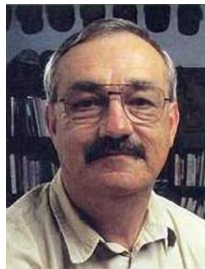
Hackle: Grizzly

Roman's fly patterns have appeared in a number of books and magazines. In his contribution to the publication, *Flies for Alberta – An Introduction to Fly Patterns for Alberta*, Roman indicates the SA Hopper was patterned after another fly, the Stimulator. In the book, *Trout Flies of Alberta and Southeastern British Columbia*, Roman explains how after the flood of 1995 he found himself relying more and more on a #8 Stimulator. However, his Stimulators would become too soaked to maintain floatation for any length of time. Roman wanted something with improved floatation that could still represent the golden stones and hoppers the fish were looking for. He found it in a material sold mainly in craft and hobby stores back then. It was closed-cell, "Fun Foam" that would provide the floatation he was looking for. The addition of Crystal Flash under the wing produced a shimmering effect, mimicking the movement of the wing. The flash material also reflected light which attracted the attention of trout.

At first, Roman used red deer belly hair for the tail and natural dark mule deer hair for the wing but later switched to elk hair. He also stressed that when wrapping the foam strip around the hook to form the body, not to wind it too tight, as this would lessen the floating qualities.

Not only does the SA Hopper work as a grasshopper imitation, it can also imitate golden and Yellow Sally stoneflies. It's a versatile fly to carry in your fly box and I wouldn't be without them. Although it can be tied in a range of sizes, I find #10-12 to be the ones I use most.

Along with his passion for fly-tying, Roman was an excellent fly angler and rod builder. For several years, he guided for my fly shop, The Crowsnest Angler. Roman was always happy and excited whenever he had the opportunity to take people out on a fishing trip. Although he is no longer with us, the fly patterns he designed and developed will be used by anglers for many years to come. Thank you, Roman.



Roman Scharabun
1952-2005