Wading thigh-deep in New York's Beaverkill River and battling to cast against the early spring breeze, a half dozen fly-fishermen repeatedly flinging their tiny, fur and feather insect-imitation lures into the current of Barnhardt Pool. Throughout the morning, these anglers have been fishing for trout with an underwater Hendrickson "nymph," a five-eighths-inch-long simulation of the larva of a mayfly species, Ephemerella subvaria. But now, at 1:00 P.M., a "hatch" is beginning. By the millions, the water-dwelling D. Subvaria larvae are quickly metamorphosing, kicking and wriggling their way to the river's fast-moving surface. Within minutes, they will shed their chitinous larval skins and become winged, flying preadults. As more of the insects appear, the pool's trout turn their attention from their earlier, underwater feeding and begin to noisily slash and sip at the river's surface, attacking the drifting preadults. The pool's fly-fishers, in turn, replace their Hendrickson nymphs with their even tinier and more delicate Hendrickson "duns," floating imitations of the E. subvaria preadult made of fox fur and rooster and wood duck feather.

The hatch may last an hour or more, each trout rising eagerly to the surface about every 10 seconds to take an insect. And each angler will focus upon a particular fish, in a particular riffle, and attempt to drift a Hendrickson dun over it, in exact synchronization with that trout's feeding rhythm.

As suddenly as it began, the hatch will cease. But later, near dusk, the fly-fishermen will be treated to a brief insect "fall." Millions of yesterday's mayflies, having undergone an overnight moult of their preadult skins, return as adults to mate mid-air over the stream, drop their fertilized eggs into the water, then collapse in a downward spiral to the river's surface and die. The trout will attack again. The anglers will attack again, this time with another handmade fly that is tied in brighter colors to simulate E. subvaria's shedding of its translucent skin and with its exhausted wings made horizontal instead of upright—the "spentwing" Hendrickson "spinner.c

There are easier and less painstaking ways of fishing for trout. Most of the nation's 18 million trout-fishermen, in fact, vastly prefer fishing with live bait or with factory-made lures. In bait fishing the angler inserts a hook into the body of a living baitfish, worm, or grasshopper and drifts the creature past a feeding trout. A fish will often ignore or spit out a trout fly as soon as it senses the false feel of feather, but with live bait, a strike and swallow by the trout are virtually guaranteed.

In lure fishing, the angler casts out and reels in large, plastic-and-metal imitations of the baitfish and other underwater trout foods. The factory lure, like the imitation fly, suffers from being artificial. But unlike the small, single-hook fly, a typical lure may be equipped with four to nine hooks along its three-inch length. And because the factory lures or live bait weigh between 75 and 300 times more than the average trout fly, it is...

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