

## Top 10 Spring Dry Flies

Dry fly fishing the west can be some of the most productive dry fly fishing we do, but the only consistent thing is it is very unpredictable. One day you can have a size #10 2 XL tied on your tippet and then the next you're down to a size 22 with 6X tippet. There are a myriad of bugs that appear in the spring and one has to cover all bases. You have to cover midges, BWO, PMD, callibaetis, several forms of caddis, and a skwala. Quite a change from winter when the only thing you're packing are small bugs. At any given point fish are going to react to a particular hatch and you have to be prepared for that at all times.

"Searcher" fishing is big on in the spring so it is appropriate to start gearing for those situations when the water is void of fish or bugs. The above mentioned possible hatches are when there are great enough numbers and the fish start to key at the surface. These would be considered hatch bugs and they are never really meant to "Searcher" fish with. That is why my top ten spring fly selections for the west have a certain amount of hatch-specific bugs, but I always pack my "Searcher" bugs. There is magic in these 10 flies. If you are packing this selection, you could successfully fish a dry fly all spring:



**Baetis Tantalizer #18:** In spring there is the arrival of the leading edge of caddis and on most rivers the BWO are just coming out of hibernation. This fly fishes perfectly for a hatching caddis or a BWO cripple. Baetis is just a fishy color and it matches a lot in wild so this fly is a multiple purpose bug. Just remember we don't care why a fish is taking something as long as it is eating your bug. I also pack this bug in a size 16 because it is the perfect Flav emerger and a Green Drake imitation.



**Callibaetis Tantalizer #16:** The arrival of the first big mayfly hitting the water is the Callibaetis and it can be a game changer. We have trained our big fish to ignore duns and feed only on emergers. That is how it feels sometimes; but in all actuality, this fly is like a cripple with a muted wing. What the fish sense is vulnerability. A fish doesn't have to chase a cripple because it has no wings to fly away, so packing this bug is huge in the spring.



**PMD Convertible #18:** If you are in a PMD hatch, this is one of the most versatile and deadly patterns in my mayfly box. If the hatch starts to wane and you are seeing spent spinners, a quick fold down of the wings turns it into spinner. Tied with bear hair, this is no-maintenance bug and has a great belly-down approach to the fish. If you like fishing No Hackles, welcome to the next generation.



**BWO Comparadun #20:** In the west we have six months of a PMD and then we have six months of BWOs. In the spring the BWO return to many rivers. It isn't like they ever left, deep winter is tough for any species besides a midge. Typically they are slightly bigger in the spring and the Comparadun has a stately look on the water. You can fish this bug in the

biggest of riffles or on a tail out or slick. You have to be packing your blue wings in the spring, that is all there is to it.



**PMD Searcher #16:** I mentioned above there are flies that keep me fishing void of the hatch and this is one of those bugs. If you know there will be a PMD at some point in the day, tie on this bug when you get to the river and fish it to holding waters. This fly is lethal; and the best part is, it has a natural elk hair wing that can be seen a quarter mile away. No excuses not seeing this bug on the water.



**Callibaetis Searcher #16:** Same principle as the PMD Searcher only this bug goes one step further. Fish it before the hatch and just keep it on during the hatch. It is a hatch bug as well as a searcher bug.



**Beetle #12:** Some of the most overlooked patterns in dry fly are the terrestrials. The interesting thing is they are the most prominent thing crawling on river edges. There are no hatches of beetles so this fly is an ultimate searching bug and fished tight to the edges. Beetles fall into the water or wind blows them into the water. Beetles can also be skated aggressively and sometimes that is the look fish are looking for. A brownie has a hard time resisting a beetle.



**Black Gold #10:** Bring on the meat! In a lot of western waters there are skwala in the spring. Black Gold is the perfect match to that species. If you find yourself on skwala waters, a Black Gold can hook you fish like a gill net. Also I fish this bug in the salmonfly and golden stone hatch. I have never seen a fly perform like this one on so many different kinds of water. Pack this bug ALL THE TIME!!!



**Olive Brown Emperor Caddis #18:** I have a fishing friend who says this fly should be outlawed on all waters. There is a lot of truth to this statement because this is the best performing caddis I have ever fished. The silhouette, size, and detail is what makes this bug look real on the water. The days of the Elk Hair Caddis for me have taken a back seat once I started fishing this caddis. The Emperor Caddis will perform on still waters, compounds, streams, or creeks. It is the all-around caddis.



**Caddidge #22:** Tail waters have midge hatches year round and if you fish the right day with the right conditions, this hatch can be intense. In spring midges never leave so I always have an ample supply of this bug for early mornings and evenings. The Caddidge also serves as a micro black caddis that arrives first on many western waters. Multi-use bugs are always found in my fly boxes at all times.