



Anatomy of a Salmon Fly

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About the author

Aleksy Pawluczuk is a designer, sculptor, and photographer based in Kraków, Poland. He has run his own design, screen print, prepress, and advertising studios since 1982, designing books, posters, logos, corporate identity, fashion, and more. Since 1990, he has taught computer-aided design and print industry workflows in Kraków at the Jan Matejko Academy of Fine Arts, the oldest university-level art school in Poland. A CorelDRAW® user since 1989, Aleksy now teaches classes and gives presentations on Corel® software in Poland and other countries.

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The only thing that can take me away from my computer and CorelDRAW is fly-fishing, my favorite hobby. The possibility of communing with wild nature and challenging a demanding opponent, as well as letting my eyes have some rest from the computer screen, is enticing. Every ambitious fly-fisher's point of honor is to catch a fish with a self-made bait that imitates insects or other creatures that are food for trout, grayling, or salmon.

Fly-tying, which is my other hobby, is often compared to an art. The beginnings of fly-fishing and fly-tying are dated to approximately the 15th century BC.

Classical salmon fly patterns are extremely complicated, and the materials used to prepare them are often expensive and difficult to obtain. They might be any from exotic bird feathers to the fur of protected animals. That is why I sometimes experiment with creating new patterns by using modern materials, like plastics, which can completely substitute for the above-mentioned fur and feathers.

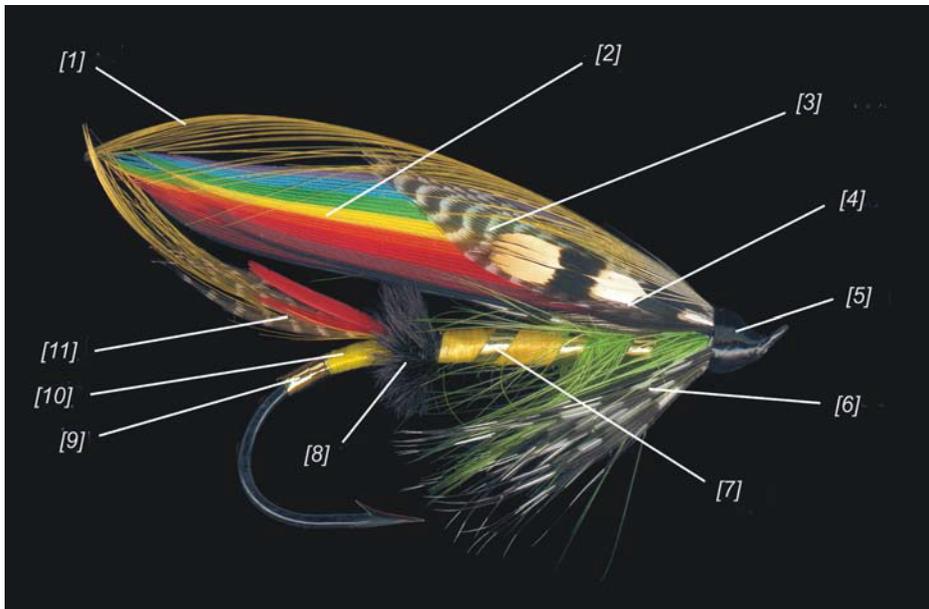


Figure 1: The elements of the salmon fly: [1] topping, [2] wing, [3] shoulder, [4] cheek, [5] head, [6] throat, [7] ribbing, [8] butt, [9] tag, [10] tip, and [11] tail

Preparing dry flies for salmon or steelhead, especially the “full-dress” type of flies, is really time-consuming and requires wide knowledge as well as patience and experience. That is why from time to time I use my computer to design a new pattern and I ask my friend Adam Sikora, a world-renowned fly-tier and fly-fisher, to make it.

CorelDRAW is perfect for this kind of task—tools like the **Blend** tool, the **Contour** tool, and the **Artistic media** tool, as well as the incredibly intuitive and easy-to-use curve editing, make it possible to design a new “killer pattern” with just a few clicks of the mouse, which is truly enjoyable and satisfying. Although you can use bitmap-editing software like Corel® Painter® or Corel PHOTO-PAINT®, CorelDRAW gives you an additional level of freedom when you create different color-tone versions or reuse previously created elements. Sometimes, I prepare draft sketches in Corel Painter and then create the final design in CorelDRAW. It is best to use a Wacom® tablet to make drawing more comfortable.

In this tutorial, I will use only built-in tools, not custom brushes or strokes. Nevertheless, the final effect is realistic and imitates the natural materials used for flies (Figure 1).

Creating the hook

We’ll begin by making the hook. (At this point, you can also set your units of measurement — I use millimeters. To change the units to millimeters, click **Layout ▶ Page setup**, and choose “millimeters” from the **Units** list box.)

Using the **3-point curve** tool , draw a line that connects the hook’s point (barb) and the eye. Drag to the left to draw the initial shape of the hook (Figure 3).

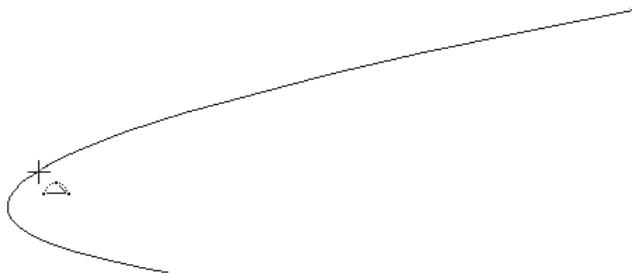


Figure 3: Drawing the hook

Modify the curve to the desired shape by using the **Shape** tool  (Figures 4 and 5). Double-click at the eye end to add a node, and then convert the node to cusp . Convert the shorter piece of curve to a line, and drag upward to make the “eye” of the hook.

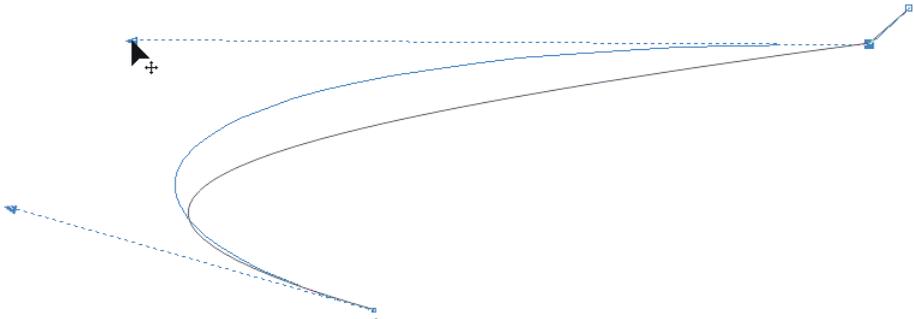


Figure 4: Modifying the curve with the **Shape** tool

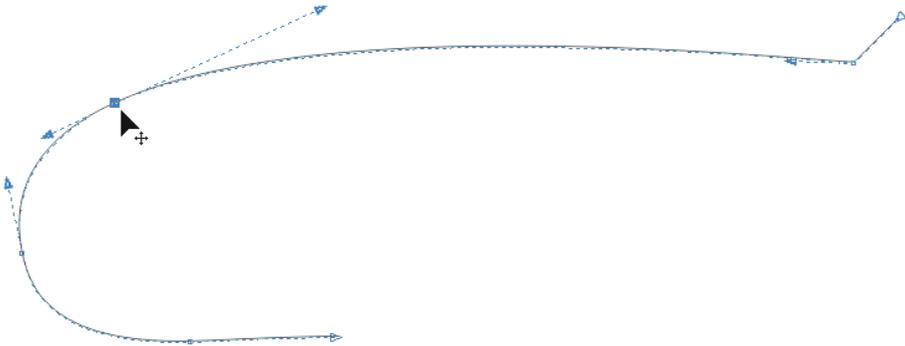


Figure 5: Add or delete nodes, as necessary, to get the right shape.

An easy way to edit the width of the curve is to open the **Outline pen** dialog box by double-clicking the **Outline** icon  (F12) on the status bar, and change the width and shape of the outline in proportion to the thickness of the hook wire. Set the line caps to round ends (click the second **Line caps** button). When you have finished editing the outline (Figure 6), convert it to an object (from the menu bar, click **Object** ▶ **Convert outline to object**, or press **Ctrl + Shift + Q**).

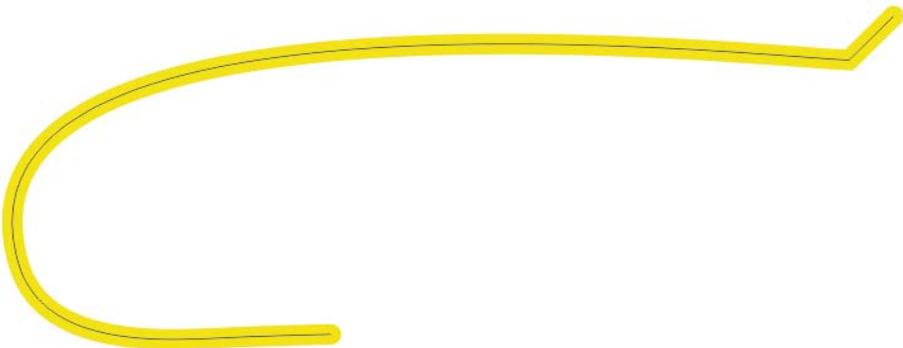


Figure 6: Edit the width and shape of the outline.

To make the barb at the bottom end of the hook, select the end nodes with the **Shape** tool, and change the rounded tip to lines. Add a node and adjust it to shape the tip (Figure 7).

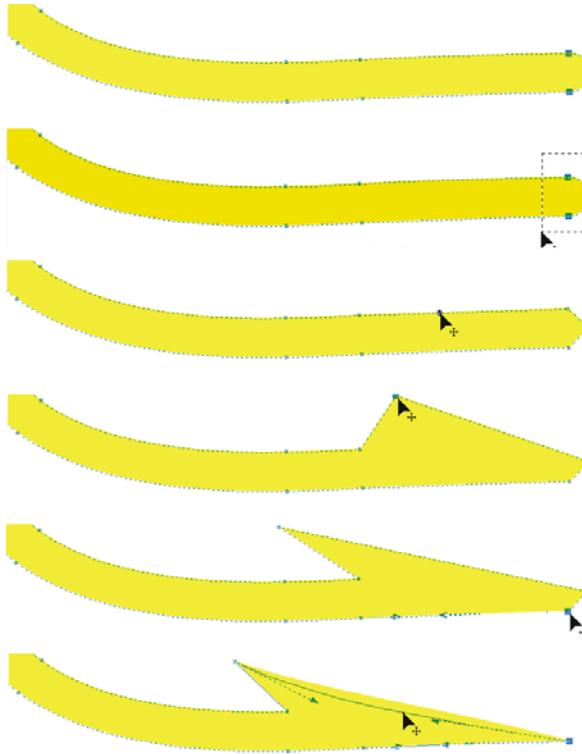


Figure 7: Making the tip of the hook

Change the color of the hook to black (Figure 8).

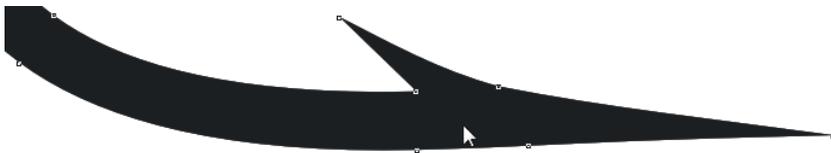


Figure 8: Changing the color

Using the **Contour** tool , pick the edge of the hook, and drag inside to create an inside contour (Figure 9).

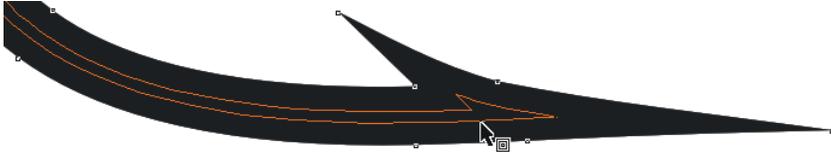


Figure 9: Adding a contour

On the property bar, set the contour steps and contour offset to achieve the desired result (Figure 10).



Figure 10: Property bar for the Contour tool

Set the fill color to **Navy blue** to create the impression of wire thickness and light reflections (Figure 11). Add orange to get a bronze feel.

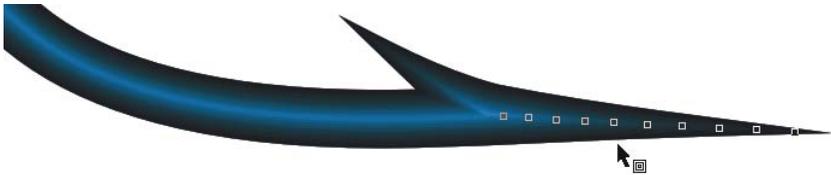


Figure 11: Creating a metallic effect

Creating the Chenille body

Now we can move on to make the body of the fly. Use the **Rectangle** tool  to draw a small rectangle on the top, straight part of the hook. Position the rectangle so that its center is vertically aligned with the center of the hook (Figure 12). Click the rectangle with the **Pick** tool  to get the rotation handles. Holding down the **Ctrl** key, drag the top center handle to the right to skew the rectangle by 15 degrees. Then, use the **Shape** tool to round the corners.

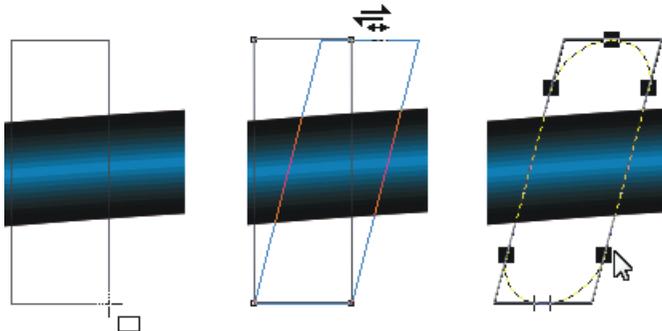


Figure 12: Drawing the rectangle

Fill the rectangle with red. In the next step, we will try to imitate a Chenille body by using the **Roughen brush** tool  (Figure 13). (It is also possible to use the **Distort** tool .) On the property bar, set the nib size of the **Roughen brush** tool to 4 mm and the frequency to 10, and then move the cursor around the edge of the object.

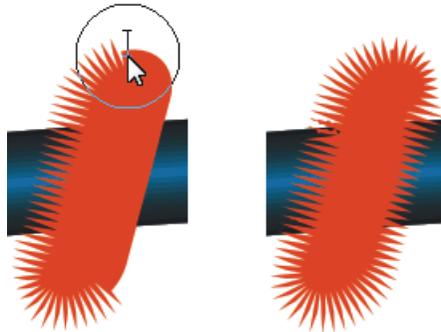


Figure 13: Using the Roughen brush tool

Select the resulting object, and press **Ctrl + D** to duplicate it. Move the duplicated object to the right end of the hook, so that the two objects are positioned at the opposite ends of the fly body (Figure 14). Select the **Blend** tool , and then click one end of the body and drag all the way to the other end. Increase or decrease the blend steps on the property bar  to obtain the desired density.

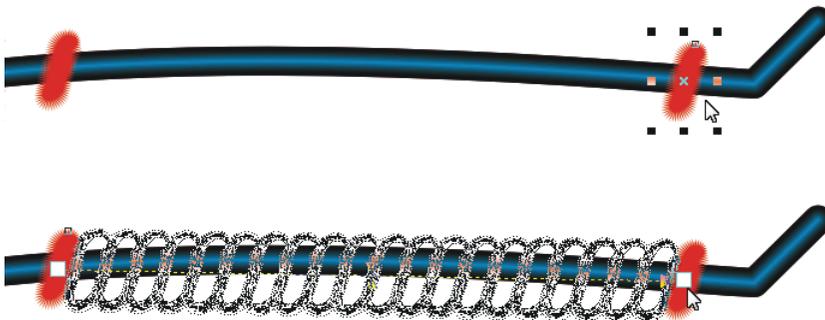


Figure 14: Creating a blend from the original object to the duplicate

Next, click the **Path properties** button  on the property bar, and select **New path**. Select the edge of the hook as the new path. Click **Object ▶ Break blend group apart**. After you separate the objects, align them so that they follow the slight curve of the hook's body (the center of each object should be vertically aligned with the center of the hook). Select the object at one end of the body, and rotate it 15 degrees to make it perpendicular to the body of the hook. Repeat this process with the object at the other end (Figure 15).



Figure 15: Rotating the end objects

Now we can start making gold tinsel ribbing. Create a slightly C-shaped curve (Figure 16). Open the **Transformation** docker (from the menu bar, click **Window** ▶ **Dockers** ▶ **Transformations** ▶ **Position**, or press **Alt + F7**). In the docker, set the horizontal (x) distance to 4 mm, type **1** in the **Copies** box, and click **Apply**. Select both curves, and click **Object** ▶ **Join Curves**. In the **Join Curves** docker, choose **Chamfer** from the list box, and set the gap tolerance to **4 mm**. In the **Object Properties** docker (**Window** ▶ **Dockers** ▶ **Object Properties**), click the **Fill** button, and then click the **Fountain Fill** button. From the **Fill** picker, choose a suitable fill preset, such as one of these presets , and then click the **Apply** button  in the pop-up window that appears. The **Rotate** value should be 90 degrees. You can fine-tune the colors in your fill by clicking the **Interactive fill** tool  and dragging colors from the color palette in the document window onto the object's interactive vector handles.

In the **Transformation** docker, set the **x** distance to 8 mm, type **1** in the **Copies** box, and click **Apply**. Click the object to get the rotation handles, and skew the object approximately 20 degrees (the width of the object). In the **Edit fill** dialog box (**F11**), set the fountain fill angle to 90 degrees.

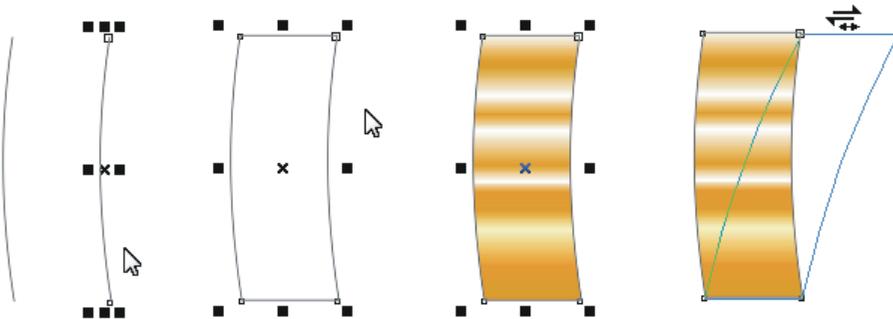


Figure 16: Creating the gold tinsel ribbing

Duplicate the object. Position the original object at one end of the hook, and move the duplicate to the other end. Then, use the **Blend** tool , as you did before, to make a blend group along the path between the two objects (Figure 17).

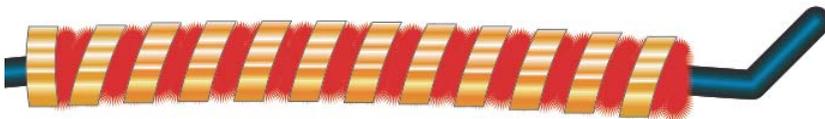


Figure 17: Creating a blend between the two ends of the hook

Use the same method to create a golden tip. Then, if necessary, change the preset in the **Fountain fill** dialog box to create a silver tag. Now the hook is finished (Figure 18).



Figure 18: The finished hook

Creating the feathers

From the toolbox, choose the **Artistic media** tool . Click the **Brush** button  on the property bar, choose **Splatter** from the **Category** list box, and choose this brush  from the **Brushstroke** list box. Draw arc-shaped tail feathers, and use the **Shape** tool to edit their shape, as you would with ordinary curves (Figure 19). Repeat the steps for each feather, and finally, apply the desired color by clicking a color palette swatch.

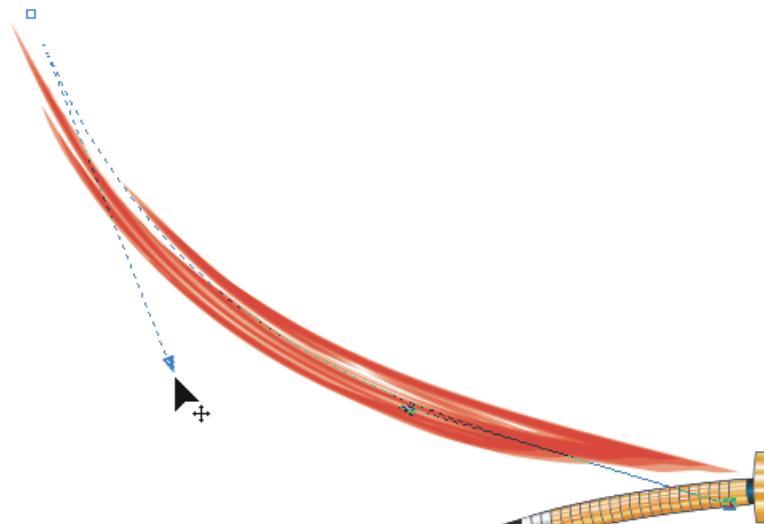


Figure 19: Shaping the feathers

In a similar way, make the feathers for the butt, throat, and wings (Figure 20).



Figure 20: Adding the butt, throat, and wing feathers

To make the feathers for the topping, draw a 0.2 mm-thick curve from the head to the end of the tail. Duplicate the curve, and reshape the duplicate (Figure 21).



Figure 21: Drawing the topping

Use the **Blend** tool  to create a blend, and change the outline color to **Deep yellow** to imitate strands from a Golden Pheasant crest (Figure 22). If you are planning on resizing the fly, remember to enable the **Scale with object** check box in the **Outline pen** dialog box or the **Outline** section of the **Object Properties** docker (**Window** ▶ **Dockers** ▶ **Object properties**).

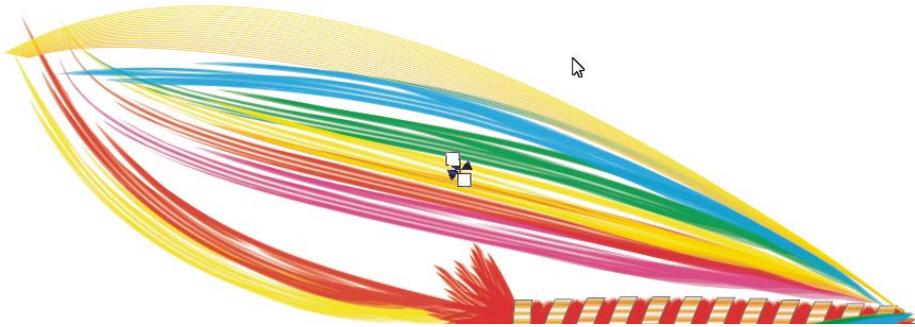


Figure 22: Applying color to the topping

Use a similar technique to make the feathers for the cheek and shoulder. First, create the outer shape curves, and then make a blend. Duplicate the compound object without moving it, and change the outline color. Click **Object ▶ Break blend group apart (Ctrl + K)**, and then ungroup the objects (**Ctrl + U**) and immediately combine them (**Ctrl + L**) to make a multiple subpath curve. From the toolbox, select the **Eraser** tool, set the desired thickness, and erase part of the curve from the upper object to simulate real feather patterns (Figures 23 and 24).



Figure 23: Erasing parts of the top object to create a realistic feather pattern



Figure 24: The finished feathers

Adding the final touches

Finally, draw the outer shape for the head, and fill it with black. Add a thin white shape, and use the **Blend** tool  again to blend the white and simulate light reflection (Figures 25 and 26).

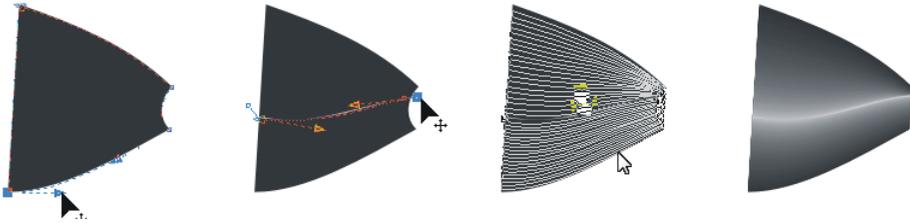


Figure 25: Creating the head

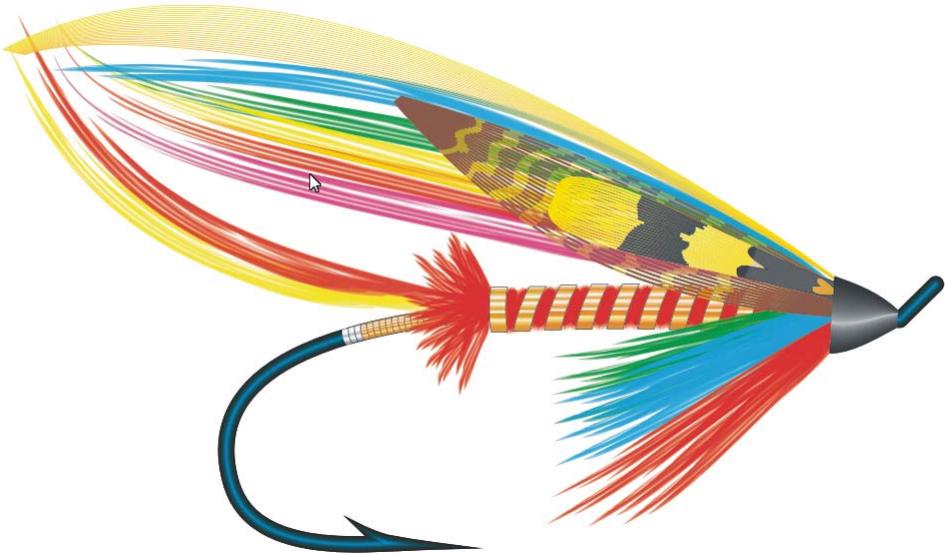


Figure 26: All the elements added together

To make a more lifelike fly, you can add an interactive drop shadow (Figure 27).

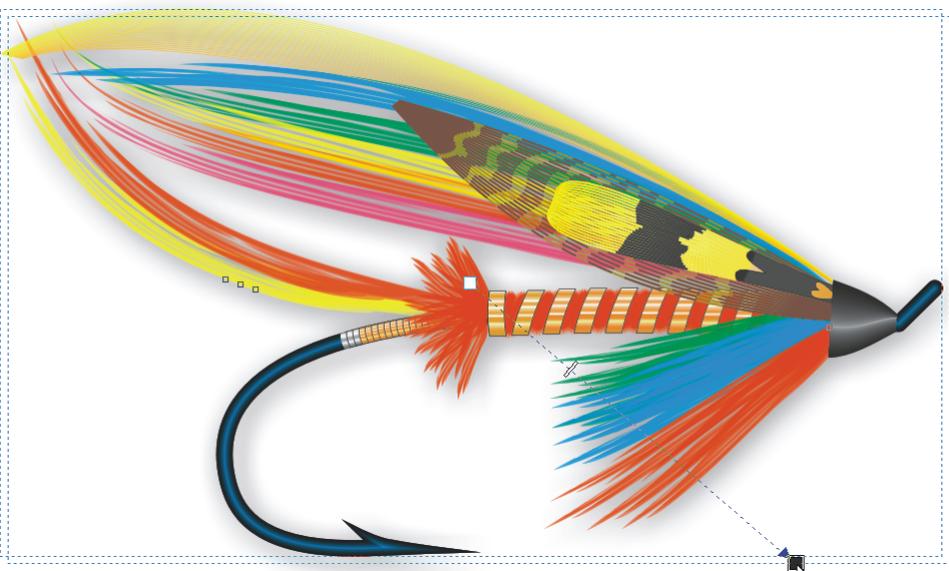


Figure 27: Adding a drop shadow

The salmon fly presented here is simplified, compared with the classical patterns, but I hope it is a good starting point to create your own dream design. Enjoy using CorelDRAW X7!

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