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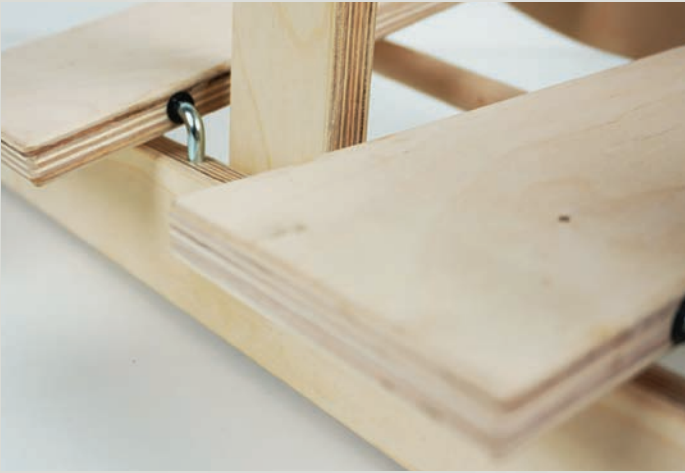
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The final prototype is shown in the photo

The final prototype is shown in the photo



What fiber crafts did you learn first? For me, it was weaving and sewing. In my early 20s, I learned to spin and knit, both of which brought a new vitality to all of my making. Looking back over more than two decades as a spinner knitter, it makes sense to me now that learning to knit three-dimensional shapes to fit my three-dimensional body helped me understand

weaving and sewing with two-dimensional cloth in a new way. For me, it's all connected—how about you?

For this cheerful Summer issue of *Spin Off*, we chose “Handspun Handknits” to explore knitting and beyond. Swedish Spinner **Josefin Waltin** had woven with her handspun linen in the past, but she discovered a twist conundrum once it was on her knitting needles. Check out her article to see how she fixed her bias! You can further harness the power of twist by using S- and Z-spun singles to create self-striping yarns, perfect for the Bari Tee by **Sarah Solomon**. And **Kim McKenna** is back to share the finer points of wet-finishing so you can get those hanks ready to cast on.

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Travel to Peru with **Dr. Carrie Brezine** to learn about cotton stockings left behind by sixteenth-century knitters, and make your own pair with **Devin Helmen**. We are also excited to share an excerpt from **Annemor Sundbø's** newest book about Norwegian sweaters, and **Angela K. Schneider** wrote instructions for the woven pick-up band that adorns

a Norwegian-made sweater from a collection at Vesterheim National Norwegian-American Museum.

No matter your textile interests—spinning for knitting, weaving, crochet, embroidery, and more—I hope this issue inspires you to use your yarn this summer!

Wishing you peace and perfectly filled bobbins,

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Vol. XLVIII No. 2 Summer 2024

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Spin Off® (print ISSN 0198-8239; online ISSN 2770-6117) is published quarterly by Long Thread Media LLC, 1300 Riverside Ave, Ste 206, Fort Collins, CO 80524; phone (888) 480-5464. Periodicals postage paid at Fort Collins, CO, and additional mailing offices. All contents of this issue of *Spin Off*® are copyrighted by Long Thread Media LLC, 2024. All rights reserved. Projects and information are for inspiration and personal use only. *Spin Off*® does not recommend, approve, or endorse any of the advertisers, products, services, or views advertised in *Spin Off*®, nor does *Spin Off*® evaluate the advertisers' claims in any way. You should, therefore, use your own judgment in evaluating the advertisers, products, services, and views advertised in *Spin Off*®. Reproduction in whole or in part is prohibited, except by permission of the publisher. Subscription rate is \$39.99/one year in the U.S., \$49.99/one year in Canada, and \$59.99/one year in international countries (surface delivery). U.S. funds only.

Postmaster: Please send address changes to 1300 Riverside Ave, Ste 206, Fort Collins, CO 80524.

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*On the cover: Handspun skeins
in Moonlit Romance and
Reflections in the Grand Canal
by Clarion Call Fiber Arts.
See page 6.
Photo by Matt Graves*

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Handspun for Handknits

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Photo by Matt Graves

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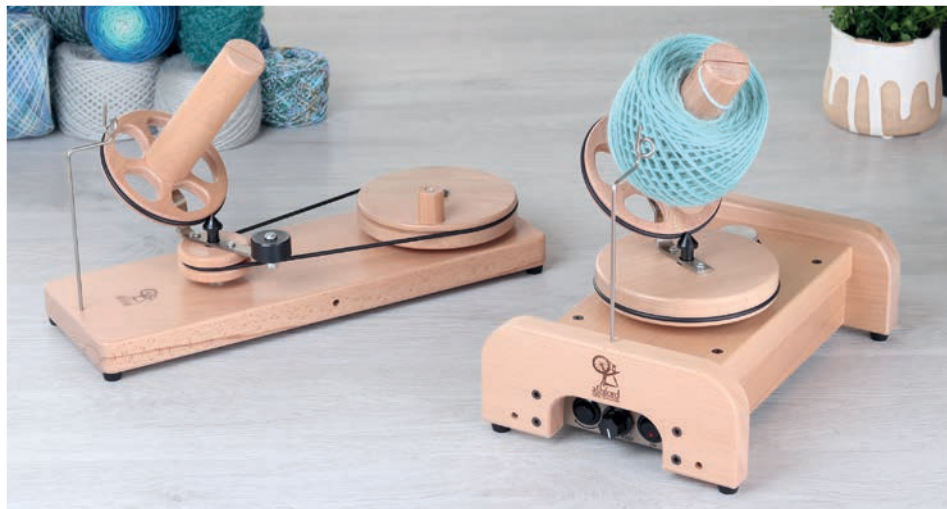
Ball Winder and e-Ball Winder

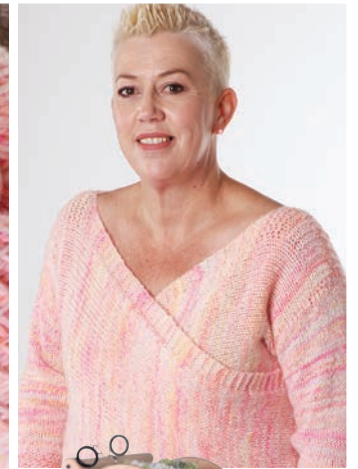
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In the Classroom

As a handwork teacher for children in a Waldorf setting, I wanted to make a useful item from scratch that I could wear in the classroom—something that could, perhaps, inspire the children in their work.

I had discovered a new skill that fascinated me—flexible embroidery (*Spin Off* Winter 2021, “Flexible Embroidery and Decorative Darning” by Susan Z. Douglas)—and I wanted to combine it with the creation of a vest from scratch. The criteria included use of materials from my Northern California Fibershed, natural dyes (local, where possible), use of my own handspun yarn, and using flexible embroidery to decorate the pockets on the vest.

I blended three shades of Shetland from nearby shepherd Lea Stewart for the vest yarn. For the embroidery, I blended two parts white Shetland and one part silk, dyed it with natural dyes, did some further blending, and spun up lots of different colors. The black embroidery yarn is natural Shetland Black.

The vest design is my own and the learning curve was steep! The vest won three ribbons at our county fair: best in class, best in division, and People’s Choice. I love wearing it while teaching, and the children love seeing it.

—Shan Kendall, California



Courtesy of Shan Kendall

Shan in her handspun, knitted, and embroidered vest



Photo by Matt Graves

On the Cover

← We couldn’t resist Clarion Overmoyer’s squishy two-ply skeins in (*from front*) Reflections in the Grand Canal and Moonlit Romance. What would you knit from these handspun beauties? Clarion spins her handspun and re-spun recycled yarns on a Louet S15. Learn more about her work at LT.Media/Clarion.

Clarion Call Fiber Arts, clarionfiber.com.

Oops!

We incorrectly identified some beautiful fiber from Living Dreams Yarn in *Spin Off* Spring 2024 “Get This.” The fiber shown is Cashmere Indulgence, a blend of 70% superfine Merino, 10% A1-grade mulberry silk, 10% rayon viscose, 5% premium tussah silk, and 5% ultrafine cashmere, in Rose Gold.

Would you like to share your handspun finished object? Tell us about it at spinoff@longthreadmedia.com.



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REVIEW BY LISA MITCHELL

Yoga of Yarn:

A Knitter's Handbook for Self-Discovery

by Liza Laird

I AM INFINITELY FASCINATED BY the intersection of wellness and crafting, so I was eager to read Liza Laird's book, *Yoga of Yarn*. In her introduction, Laird shares her personal journey of using yoga to cope with and recover from the physical and emotional challenges of cancer. During her illness, she grieved the discomfort that knitting caused. Yoga helped her get back to knitting. She now sees "yoga as a pathway to knitting with comfort, ease, and joy throughout all of life's ups and downs." She tells us how this discovery spurred her Yoga and Yarn retreats where participants enjoy practicing yoga, meditation, and breathing techniques. All of these activities can be used to become stronger and healthier, not only when knitting, but also in everyday life.

I'm a lifelong knitter but my passion is spinning, so while *Yoga of Yarn* talks specifically to knitters, I was curious about how much of Laird's message could apply to spinning. Her gentle reminder to pay attention to our bodies while hand-crafting is certainly helpful to all who use their hands to create. She provides descriptions and images of stretches for our hands and bodies that feel good. I enjoyed the section on different yogic breathing

techniques and how they may support both my spinning and knitting.

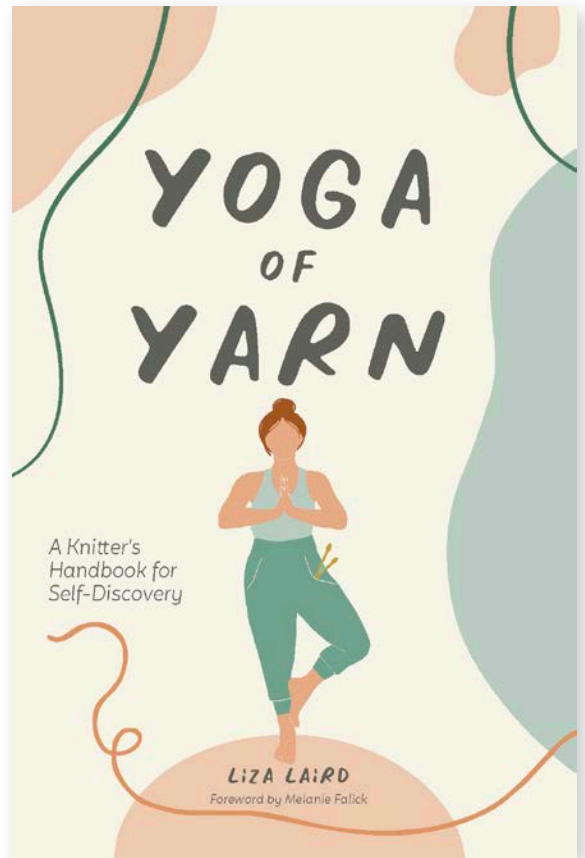
My favorite section in the book is entitled "Beginner's Mind," where Laird explains, "When we approach our experiences with a beginner's mind, they become richer, more varied and complex, and worthier of our respect and appreciation." I learned that Beginner's

Mind helps me in three ways. First, it frees me of judgment, and I can stop worrying about how my project will turn out; second, it reduces my anxiety; and third, it shuts down procrastination.

This book describes how knitting relates to yoga in many thought-provoking ways. I love Laird's idea of starting with an intention, imbuing my projects with a feeling, and paying attention to my focus or gaze. Laird also asks us to consider the relationship between our knitting style and our yoga style. She provides a chart that lists types of knitting, i.e., cables, scarves, shawls, socks, etc., with the yoga style that

matches, i.e., hatha, restorative, vinyasa, etc. I was tickled to find that according to this chart, as someone who loves Fair Isle knitting, I should match well with an Ashtanga style of yoga that is mentally and physically demanding. This couldn't be more untrue for me; however, in keeping with the book's invitation, I am going to keep an open mind and add some more challenging yoga sequences to my practice.


If you want to bring more calm and a spiritual approach to your hand-work without going to a weekend retreat, you will find some great inspiration in *Yoga of Yarn*. ●



Forestburgh, NY: RK Press, 2022. Paperback, 186 pages. ISBN 9781737502104.

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Wild Hand is a LYS (local yarn store) that's a self-proclaimed "community that believes in the magic of fiber craft . . . nestled in Philadelphia's Mt. Airy neighborhood." We reached out to the Wild Hand staff and posed the question, "What are a few things in your shop that you love for knitting spinners?" Here are some of their top picks.



3

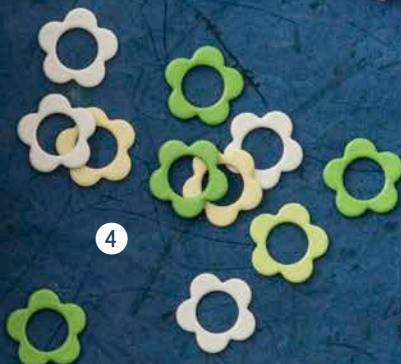


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5



4

1 Add a dash of pizzazz to your next project with these Gold Glitter Hands Buttons from **TextileGarden** in England. These unique 12-millimeter buttons are made from white shell and feature a glittery raised-hands design.

2 Keep track of your stitches and rows with the press of a button using this Knitting Row Counter from **Cocoknits**. Magnified numbers are easy to read, and a locking tab will prevent the dials from accidentally advancing when not in use.

3 The way you wash your finished projects is different from the way you wash your raw wool. This Organic Wild Wool Wash, handmade and exclusive to **Wild Hand**, is specially designed for your handknits using ingredients such as lavender essential oil to help keep moths away.

4 Knitting notions don't come any cuter than these Flower Stitch Markers from **Allstitch Studio**. The set includes 32 rings that fit up to US size 10.5 (6.5 mm) needles, and the seamless design prevents snags.

5 The Fuzz Off Comb by **Cocoknits**, crafted from a 100 percent biodegradable plant fiber, removes pills and fiber fuzz from handmade or store-bought garments. Measuring just under 5 inches (12.5 centimeters) long when folded (and less than 9 inches [23 centimeters] when open), this is one handy tool to slip into your project bag.

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REVIEW BY ERIKA ZAMBELLO

Knit 2 Socks in 1:

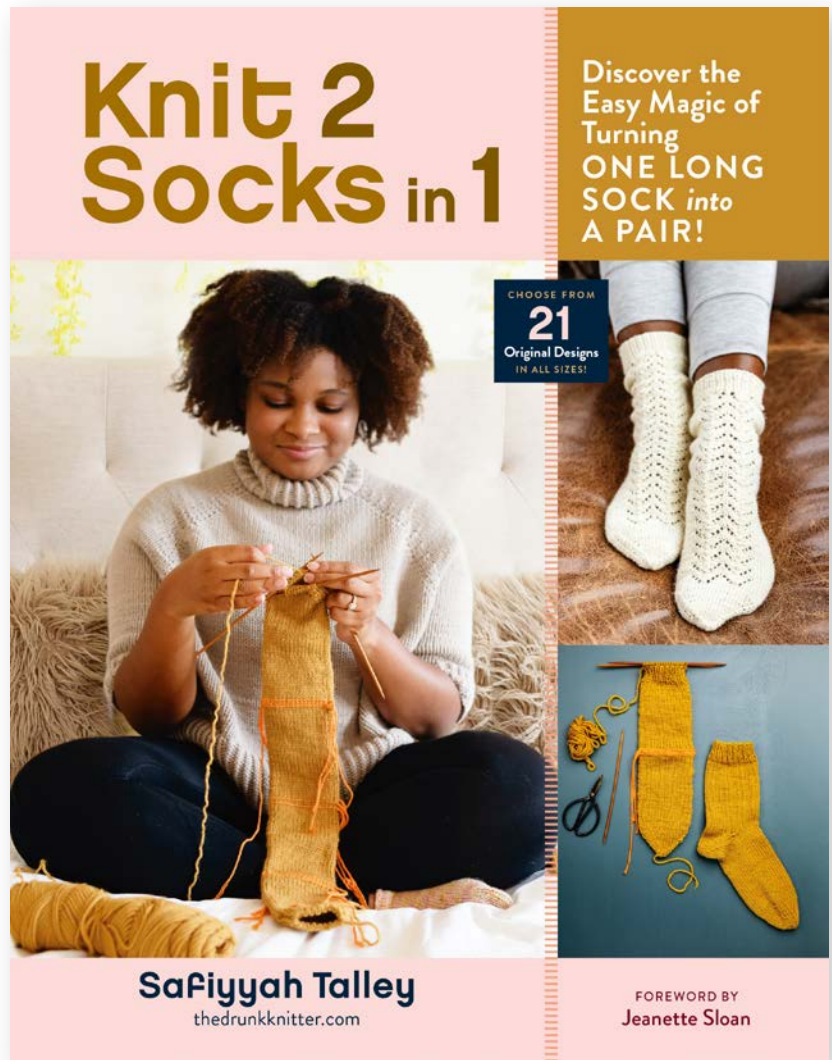
Discover the Easy Magic of Turning One Long Sock into a Pair!

by Safiyyah Talley

I KNIT A LOT OF socks. One year, in fact, I decided to devote myself so exclusively to sock knitting that I produced 52 pairs—one for each week of the year. So you know that when I say I've found my preferred method of sock knitting, thanks to the book *Knit 2 Socks in 1* by Safiyyah Talley, it's a big deal.

I opened to the first few pages of the book, ready to cast on with fingering-weight sock yarn and a tiny circular needle. Talley's writing charmingly takes the knitter on a "choose your own adventure" path to make socks that work for each individual style, regardless of preferred method for knitting socks, yarn weight, foot size, or chosen pattern. She did her research. As Talley writes in the introduction: "I flipped through books, 'ancient' blog posts, and many, many knitting patterns. I knitted so many socks that everyone I know will have warm feet for decades to come. I measured feet, studied international size charts, and knitted like a machine until I came up with the Two-Socks-in-One method."

After following her easy-to-read instructions and referencing the clear and well-labeled photographs,



North Adams, MA: Storey Publishing, 2022. Hardcover, 152 pages. ISBN 9781635864076.

I was off to the races. Like many, I am soothed by the rhythmic clicking of needles, and using Talley's method, I merely had to briefly pause in the places where heels and toes would go before continuing along the current of my stockinette stitch. I slipped the sock project into my purse for trips to the mountains, brief stops in neighborhood parks, even a visit to my local brewpub, slowly building the rows I needed for two socks.



Erika's happy feet

Photos by Erika Zambello

It's worth noting that finishing the socks does take some concentration and, for me, a clear place at the kitchen table so I can snip with scissors and knit in the right places, but that's a small price to pay for a relaxing sock-knitting journey.

In addition to a basic sock, which I tried first, Talley includes a variety of textured and colorwork patterns as well as designs intended for kids and infants.

After trying out her simple but thrillingly effective Two-Socks-in-One method, I'm hooked. Gone are "second-sock syndrome" issues because I keep motoring along with my chosen yarn and pattern, never stopping until the end of the project when I finish off heels and toes.



After most of the knitting is done, the socks are separated and finished.

Gone are any fit problems because she provides stitch charts that take into account both foot and yarn

size. I recommend Talley's book for beginning knitters and sock experts, and everyone in between! ●

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Sheep at work

Photo by Allison Robbert

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Babydoll Southdowns in the City

LAUREEN BRANTING

I'm familiar with the many uses of sheep: for dairy, meat, and, of course, wool. But mowing lawns? In northern Virginia, Cory Suter of LambMowers.com owns an adorable flock of Babydoll Southdowns that mow suburban yards—they weed, trim grass, and fertilize private urban yards and gardens. My friend Rachel met Cory and his sheep at a lamb mowing party, and while everyone enjoyed watching the cute sheep grazing on the homeowner's property, Rachel chatted with Cory and was invited to attend a shearing. She later brought home 12 fleeces for us to process.

Cory started working on his business plan for LambMowers in 2014 and purchased the web domain for the future business. After years of using his flock to graze on the small permaculture farm he owns with his wife, he launched the urban lawn-mowing business

in 2021 and is still going strong.¹ The goal was to provide “chemical-free weed and feed” urban lawn and garden care. The sheep often like weeds—especially yard nuisances, including bindweed, dandelions, creeping Charlie, oniongrass, and clover—more than turf grasses. Because the sheep have preferences, the lawn mowing is not perfect. The “feed” part of this equation is the sheep waste left behind, conveniently and naturally pelletized. This organic, low-odor, biodegradable fertilizer quickly begins to break down and nourish plants and soil life. Plus, small hooves can help improve the soil.

In the northern Virginia area, Cory takes the sheep to homeowners' yards, community gardens, church grounds, and birthday parties. Parties, both planned and unplanned, develop around the mowing. The

sheep provide an added mental health benefit, as cited in a study at University of California, Davis, in which participants reported lower stress levels after observing the sheep.² But it's not all work and no play for these sheep; recently, they starred in a music video before going to their day job of eating weeds.

WHY BABYDOLL SOUTHDOWN?

Cory's sheep have a serious cute factor and sweet dispositions; people love them. He provides alfalfa pellets (also known as sheep candy) for folks to give to the flock. Additionally, Babydolls are good mothers, easily kept within temporary fences, and small. Being small has benefits. Their short stature means most trees are safe from being munched as the sheep graze. Also, Cory can get 14 sheep into a 12-by-6-foot trailer, making transport to most urban areas possible. He is currently breeding his sheep to be small with sweet temperaments on his five-acre farm.

When I talked with Cory in the fall of 2023, his flock had already grazed well over one hundred properties that year. He believes this kind of business can provide a good revenue stream for shepherds near other urban areas and has plans to offer other shepherds the opportunity for a LambMowers franchise. Cory and his Babydolls have received local and national attention, and judging by the number of queries Cory has



Photo by Allison Robbert



Cory wearing a hat Lauren spun and knitted for him using his flock's wool

Photo by Cory Suter

received, there is interest in a “chemical-free weed and feed” service outside of the mid-Atlantic area. Cory says he would “love to help other shepherds have a new revenue stream” that also helps heal the environment.

THE FLEECE HAUL

The amount of vegetable matter (VM) and second cuts in the skirted fleece wasn't too bad for sheep doing this kind of work. Cory is clear that he is not focused on wool production. The dirty white fleeces became a soft white when washed. Rachel and I opened the locks, removed obvious VM, rinsed the locks with cold water, soaked them in hot tap water with Unicorn Power Scour, and rinsed again with warm-to-the-touch water. We repeated the process until the rinse water looked clean.³ The fleece was interesting and varied. Some fiber was coarse with little crimp; some had wonderful crimp. The staple length ranged from 1 to 3 inches (2.5 to 7.6 centimeters).

The relatively short fiber suggested that a woolen preparation would be the best fit for most of the washed fleece. After three passes through my Clemes and Clemes drumcarder, I divided the batt into quarters lengthwise and spun the resulting strips, picking out any VM and second-cut nepps as I worked. The nicest longer locks could be combed. The resulting worsted preparation—handcombed sliver—had very little VM. I set the combed slivers aside and started exploring the batts first.



Photo by Matt Graves

Top from left: A raw lock and washed locks from different parts of the fleeces. Bottom from left: Bulky-weight yarn from Lauren's first samples and worsted-weight yarn from the second samples

First Sample Set: Bulky

I found the carded batts pleasurable to spin with a woolen draw on my Ashford Joy using the largest whorl. Babydoll Southdown spins up like the down fiber it is, creating an elastic woolen yarn with memory and bounce. Desiring a bulky yarn, I spun the batt strips using a backward draw (long draw) to create S-spun singles for a Z-spun two-ply. The resulting 800 yards varied from about 750 to less than 650 yards per pound (ypp), measuring between bulky and super bulky. While I was happy with this squishy, lofty yarn, I wasn't happy with the variation between skeins.

Many resources mention that down-breed wool, such as Babydoll, is resistant to felting. After knitting a swatch with my lofty handspun, I put it through machine wash and dry cycles. I saw a small amount of shrinkage: about 12% in stitches per inch (width) and none in rows per inch (height).

Second Sample Set: Worsted

I wanted to get less variation between skeins, so I spun on my Ashford Joy using the second-smallest whorl and spun woolen from over the fold. This gave me more control and a more consistent yarn grist. I checked ply-back wraps per inch and angle every third batt strip. I did get more consistent yarn in a



Photo by Allison Robbert

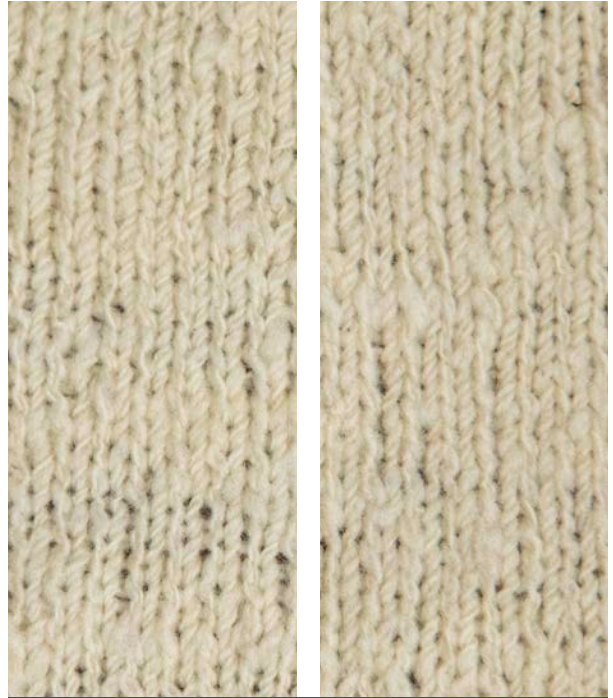
worsted-weight (970–1,141 ypp). The resulting yarn has memory and exhibited similar shrinkage: about 9% in stitches per inch and less than 1% in rows per inch.

VIRGINIA AND BEYOND

While there is some use of sheep in maintenance of commercial and public properties, the LambMowers business is fairly unique since it specializes in private yards and local community gardens. Currently, some electric companies use sheep to maintain solar farms.⁴ In Northern California, the Kaos Sheep Outfit has a sustainable business grazing Australian Corriedale sheep in vineyards, orchards, and golf courses and for homeowners' associations.⁵



Bulky-weight samples: handwashed and air-dried; machine-washed and machine-dried



Worsted-weight samples: handwashed and air-dried; machine-washed and machine-dried

From western Europe to Canada to Japan, sheep are used for landscape maintenance. Munching sheep can be seen on Amazon properties, at Arlington National Cemetery, and beyond. Many organizations are replacing noisy fossil-fuel equipment with sheep. As Cory says, the sheep eat weeds, trim the grass, improve the soil, and provide non-smelly organic fertilizer. And in LambMowers' case, the Babydolls are cute! With Cory's plans to share his success with other shepherds, you may see lawns near you being mowed by sheep. If you ask nicely, the shepherd or shepherdess may even give you some fleece! ●

Notes

1. Faiza Elmasry and Adam Greenbaum, "Lambs Mowing Lawns," *VOA News*, September 16, 2022, voanews.com/a/6750288.html.
2. Karen Nikos-Rose, "Surprising Benefits of Using Sheep as Lawn Mowers." University of California, Davis, February 21, 2023, ucdavis.edu/curiosity/news/surprising-benefits-of-sheep-mowers.
3. Judith MacKenzie, *Three Bags Full*, video course, learn.longthreadmedia.com.
4. Natalie Johnson, "Landscape to Lambscape: How Sheep Are Reshaping Solar Farm Maintenance," *Maintenance World*, August 30, 2023, maintenanceworld.com/2023/08/30/landscape-to-lambscape-how-sheep-are-reshaping-solar-farm-maintenance.

5. "Kaos Sheep Outfit," [Fibershed](https://fibershed.org/producers/kaos-sheep-outfit), fibershed.org/producers/kaos-sheep-outfit.

Resources

- Coren, Michael J. "The Surprising Benefits of Switching to 'Lamb Mowers,'" *The Washington Post*, October 24, 2023, [washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/2023/10/24/lawn-care-mowing-sheep-grazing](https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/2023/10/24/lawn-care-mowing-sheep-grazing/).
- LambMowers, lambmowers.com.

Lauren Branting considers herself a "jack of all trades and master of none," mostly because she has textile ADD—a day washing wool, then to carding or combing, and on to spinning. All this wonderful yarn calls to be knitted or woven, used for tatting, or transformed into bobbin lace.



Exciting things are happening in Quebec's fiber community! We reached out to four makers creating and selling beautiful fibers for spinners in Canada and beyond.

Melanie Allaire

Owner, A Lair Artifacts

How did you get into your craft?

From the early days of getting my hands messy with all sorts of crafts to this very moment, I've always been driven by curiosity, eager to experiment and dive into anything remotely creative. What began as a childhood curiosity grew into a love for design, textiles, and fashion that ultimately blossomed into a fulfilling career. I found myself not just creating beautiful pieces but also delving into the scientific aspects of fiber arts. The interplay between the technical and artistic aspects became my playground,



Hand-dyed top by A Lair Artifacts

where I could merge my love for science with the creativity of design. A Lair Artifacts was born from a simple desire: sharing my love and curiosity for the incredible variety of sheep breeds and fibers with fellow spinners in Quebec, sprinkled with a touch of creativity and a flair for mystery.

What is your favorite part of the process?

Every step—even the ones that might seem mundane to others—fills me with gratitude for doing what I absolutely love. Each moment in this process is a unique thread in the rich tapestry of my craft, and I consider myself incredibly fortunate to savor every single one. But if I had to narrow it down, curating vibrant colorways with moody vibes and stumbling upon new breeds/blends

to introduce to our fantastic spinning community would be at the top of the list. And, of course, creating handcarded batt blends that make your fingers tingle with excitement.

What would you like us to know about your work?

Experimenting with over 40 different blends and breeds, I've practically become a matchmaker between fibers and dyes. Each breed has its own quirks, and understanding their personalities well enough to get the perfect hand-dyed result has been quite the journey. It's like having a conversation with each batch—they all have their unique tales to tell.

Visit alairartifacts.com and find Melanie on Instagram @allaire.melanie to learn more.



Photos by Melanie Allaire

Melanie Allaire

Paule Trudel-Bellemare

Owner, Les Laines Urso

How did you get into your craft?

It feels like I have been a knitter and a creative since my childhood. When I took some time off from my illustration career for maternity leave, my knitting hobby took a bigger place. I tried yarn dyeing for fun, and it felt like such a natural way of expressing myself and my love of both colors and handknits. Next thing I knew, my little yarn business took over the illustration gigs, and I fell even harder for all things fiber.

I vividly remember learning to spin at the TWIST fiber festival with Alexina Hicks from L'aime



Photos courtesy of Paule Trudel-Bellemare

Paule Trudel-Bellemare

Laine. It took me a while to get the hang of it, for my fingers and brain to cooperate, but I was hooked. Dyeing fiber really felt like the next level of fun. I get to imagine

not only what my clients and friends will knit but also how they will play and design their yarn.

What would you like us to know about your work?

Alexina was a great mentor. She and her husband Yves-Antoine even designed a great spindle for my Urso customers. I also got to collaborate with them, illustrating for custom Majacraft wheels with wild roses and more. Adding fibers and spindles to my yarn offerings felt so wholesome for me. Just like my illustrations and my knitting designs, these facets are simply different ways of expressing my creativity and my artistic body of work.

Visit Paule on Instagram @ursoyarnco.



Carded fibers by Les Laines Urso

Marie-Pierre Chabot

Owner, Mapi Créations

What is your favorite part of creating spinning fibers and handspun yarns?

I enjoy every step of the process, but it's dyeing that drives me the most. When the time comes to select colors, it's all my creativity that's put to work. I channel my intuition and that always serves me well. I'm inspired by the nature that surrounds me—always so generous with me. My Bolivian roots are probably responsible for the passion that guides my craft. I highly believe that it connects me to my ancestors, and I hope my dyeworks will bring joy into my customers' lives.



Hand-dyed batt by Mapi Créations



Photos courtesy of Marie-Pierre Chabot

Marie-Pierre Chabot

What would you like customers to know about your work?

Here are some little-known facts about my work. For starters, I put a lot of care into how I source my fibers. I prioritize small family farms where the animals are well loved, and I place a lot of importance on sourcing my fibers locally. The transformation process is done at my studio in a true artisan

way: the products you get in your hands have been touched by mine throughout the process—washing fleeces, dyeing, carding, or handspinning art yarns for your knitting or crochet projects.

Visit mapi creations.ca to learn more about Marie-Pierre and her fiber.

Shani Théorêt

Owner, Bleu Poussière

What would you like customers to know about your work?

My fiber journey started in 2017 with knitting and natural dyes. Color has always been a passion of mine, and the idea of creating natural colors on yarn that I could use to knit garments for myself was enchanting. It encompasses everything that I love and value: making by hand, ancient knowledge, color chemistry, a sense of place and time, and so much more. Each color has a history and a unique recipe to achieve it. For example, Tyrian purple, also known as imperial purple, is a historic purple dye reserved for royalty because it was made from the oxidized secretions of the murex sea snails. An ancient dye more valuable than gold, Tyrian purple is mentioned multiple times in Homer's *Odyssey*, and its discovery by Hercules and his dog has been depicted in art history.

Today, it's not that colors don't mean anything, because they still



Shani Théorêt

hold a lot of symbolism, but their intrinsic value is not as rich as natural colors. Since 1856, colors have been synthesized in laboratories, and this did great things for the world. Think about the impressionists and how this allowed them to buy paint in tubes for plein air painting instead of making their own expensive pigments. But as an artist, I do believe that natural colors have a meaning and nature that just doesn't compare to anything else. Producing naturally dyed yarns on a commercial scale is a laborious challenge, but I couldn't do it otherwise; I love

working around the limitations natural dyes impose; the satisfaction of finding the right alchemy for a particular tint to emerge is a magnificent quest that makes me feel a little bit like a magician.

Over the last years, I fell into the world of spinning and carding fibers, and I mainly see this as another way to play with color. Fiber is the medium that I chose to specialize in, but color is and will always be my first love. I really enjoy how diverse the fiber world can be. Whether it's yarn for knitting, threads for embroidery, or fiber for spinning, I love to work with it all. I especially love the work others such as Mapi, Urso, and A Lair Artifacts bring to the spinning community here in Quebec. They each have a unique sense of color, and I love to include their works in my carding or spinning creations.

Visit bleupoussiere.com to learn more about Shani.

Is there a dyer, toolmaker, fiber producer, or mill we should feature? Tell us about your favorite makers—large or small—at spinoff@longthreadmedia.com.

Photos courtesy of Shani Théorêt



Four batts by Bleu Poussière



After finishing, natural-color cottons deepen in color.

Photos by Matt Graves unless otherwise noted

A Stocking Study

Spinning Cotton for Knitting

DEVIN HELMEN

I have always loved natural-color cotton, and initially, I used my handspun cotton yarns only for weaving. I had tried knitting with commercially spun cotton yarn earlier in my fiber life and did not like it. It had little or no memory or elasticity, and knitting with cotton hurt my hands.

I loved spinning cotton, though, and eventually I was convinced to try knitting with handspun cotton and found the experience totally different. I started first by using yarn spun on spindles during meetings at work. The singles had less twist than I normally use, so I plied it a little looser as well. I ended up with a fun

scarf showcasing the many colors of cotton I had in my stash. My next project was a T-shirt knitted from cotton spun and plied on my e-spinner. I purposely added a little less twist and aimed for a coherent but not firmly twisted yarn. To my surprise, I found that my handspun cotton—even after boiling during finishing—had a discernable amount of elasticity and slightly more memory than I found in commercial cotton yarns. It was a joy to knit with.

HANDSPUN COTTON SOCKS?

I knit several pairs of wool socks every year, and after completing the cotton T-shirt, I knew I wanted to try a pair of handspun cotton socks. My first thought was of the Magdalena de Cao Viejo Stockings by Carrie Brezine, published in a 2014 issue of *PieceWork*. The article and pattern, exploring textile history and archaeology, stuck in my mind for years. I decided I would knit the pattern and see if I liked knitting—and especially wearing—handspun cotton socks.

I had some brown and cream-colored handspun from the T-shirt project and needed one more color. As I dug in my stash, I found a green that was slightly finer but would work. I had spun the cream and brown yarns specifically for knitting, with slightly thicker and lower-twist singles and a balanced plying twist; they were close to a fine laceweight. The green, however, was a finer and more irregular singles with balanced plying twist, which I would equate with a gossamer laceweight yarn. All three yarns were three-ply. I knitted a gauge swatch using the three-ply yarns and size 1 (2.25 mm) needles. The result was a good fabric, though it was slightly finer than the gauge required for the socks.

I am used to altering sock patterns to fit my wide ankles and feet, and I altered this pattern as well. Since my gauge was finer than the original pattern, I added stitches to the cast-on for a total of 100 stitches, and when I knitted the leg, I worked fewer decrease rounds for calf shaping. For the rest of the sock, I adjusted the numbers accordingly, and all of those changes are reflected in the adapted version of the original project on page 26.



SUCCESSFUL SOCKS

The knitting itself was pleasant. I always love working with my handspun, and making socks from handspun cotton was exciting for me. It's thrilling to accomplish something new in my spinning and textile work. The color changes kept the knitting interesting, and I loved seeing the natural colors of the cotton working together to make a pattern. The instructions make particular mention of measuring gauge only after washing and drying the sample, and I did not do this. It could have been a problem, which is why Carrie included the note in the original instructions, but I was very lucky. After knitting, the socks seemed too big and rather loose, but once I washed them in my standard washing machine on regular cycle in cold water with my normal clothes and hung them to dry, they fit snugly and comfortably to my feet. I could have easily been unlucky and had the socks be too small. Going forward, I will make sure to wash and finish my gauge swatches for handspun cotton, since it doesn't have the elasticity of wool that I'm used to when knitting socks.



Devin's handspun cotton used in weaving and knitting. To see Devin's handspun cotton woven shirt, see *Spin Off* Spring 2019.

Photo by George Boe



I had never knitted or worn a garter-stitch heel, and I was worried about the feel of the garter ridges, but the heel is surprisingly comfortable. In fact, the shape suits my foot better than the German heel I usually knit.

My Magdalena de Cao Viejo Stockings got some wear last summer with sandals indoors and with some brown leather shoes. They are delightfully comfortable, and I am looking forward to knitting several more pairs of handspun cotton socks, which will expand my handspun wardrobe even more. I highly recommend revisiting handspun cotton for knitting if, based on experience with millspun, you had decided it was not for you. ●

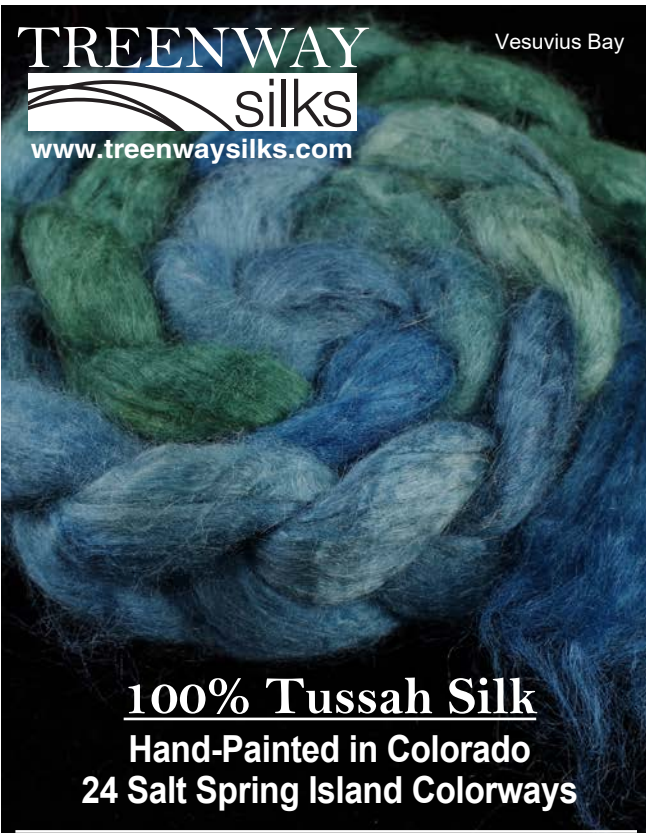
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- Helmen, Devin. "To Spin a Shirt." *Spin Off*, Spring 2019, 34–38.

Devin Helmen has been immersed in fiber since learning to spin at age eight. They spin, knit, and weave in beautiful Minnesota. Devin enjoys writing and teaching about fiber arts and has a passion for spindles and everyday textiles. They blog, intermittently, at afewgreenfigs.blogspot.com.

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Photos by Matt Graves unless otherwise noted

Magdalena de Cao Viejo Stockings

ORIGINAL PATTERN BY CARRIE BREZINE,
ADAPTED FOR HANDSPUN BY DEVIN HELMEN

No complete stocking has been found in excavations of the colonial town of Magdalena de Cao Viejo, Peru. Of the two artifacts of cotton knitting that are identifiably stockings, one has stripes of natural and light brown, and the other has stripes of natural and dark brown with a checked pattern. This project combines both elements: a stripe pattern in two natural colors accented by bands of the checkerboard. At least two wool stocking artifacts from Magdalena de Cao Viejo are knee length with some leg shaping, and the cotton examples, although partial, also have a few decreases to shape the leg. The decreases are retained in this project.

One surviving cotton stocking has an incomplete rectangular heel flap in garter stitch. Indeed, all of the heels found on cotton and wool stockings were worked in garter stitch, but no entire heels exist. Most have been worn through. Scraps of woven linen cloth still attached to the heel area of a couple of the stockings show attempts at patching to extend wear. Without a complete heel, it is impossible to know how colonial Andean knitters handled the junction of foot and leg. In all surviving samples that include stitches picked up around the garter-stitch area, the direction of stockinette-stitch knitting is perpendicular to the direction of garter-stitch knitting. No live heel-flap stitches continue into the bottom of the foot. Thus, the project heel is shaped so that the stitches for the gusset and the bottom of the foot are all perpendicular to the direction of garter-stitch knitting. The few existing knitted artifacts that show a stocking top or toe are made of wool. There is no ribbing at the top (the stockings would have been held up with garters); the cast-on edge begins immediately in stockinette stitch, which causes the knitted fabric to curl outward. The project stockings have a curled top edge,

but I have followed it with a band of ribbing to help keep the stockings up without garters.

—Carrie Brezine

MATERIALS

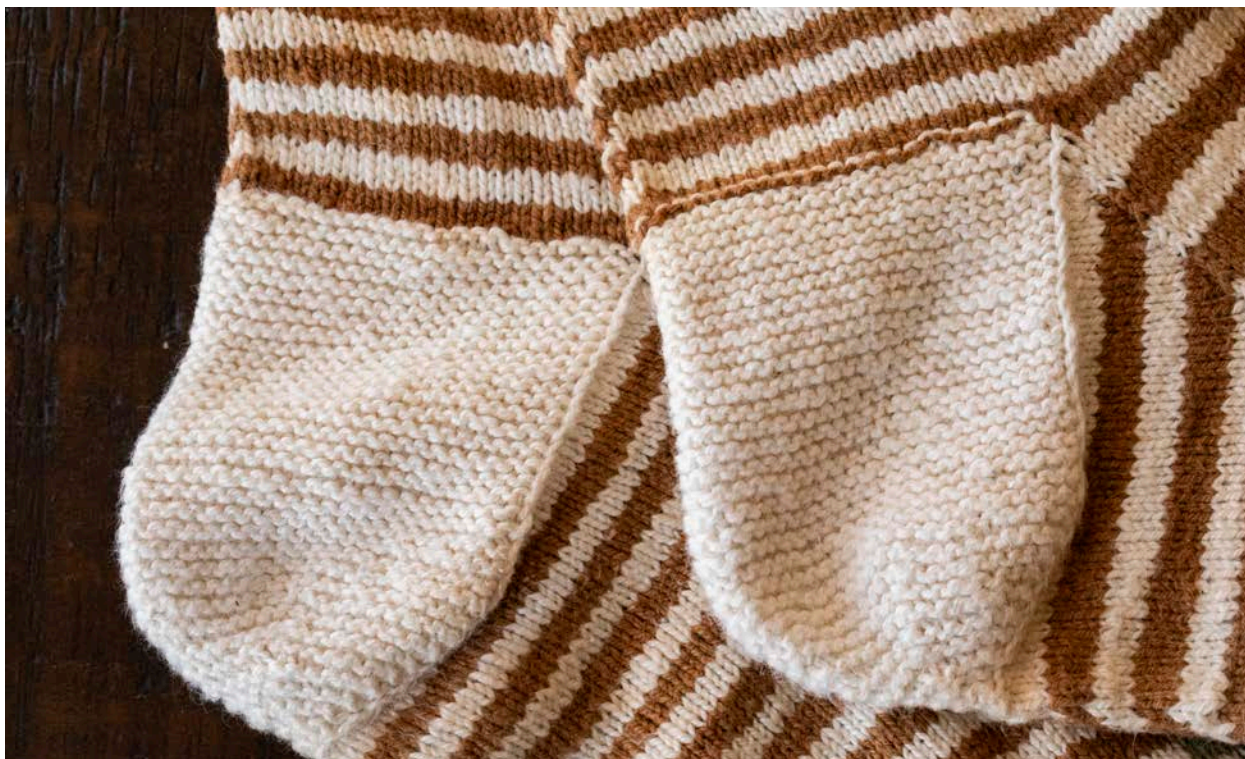
Fiber Natural-colored cotton, natural (MC), brown (CC1), and green (CC2), 3½ oz (99 g) total.

Yarn 3-ply laceweight (2,450 ypp; 23 wpi), 536 yd.

Needles Size 2 (2.75 mm) and 1 (2.25 mm); sets of 5 double-pointed needles (dpm). Adjust needle size if necessary to obtain gauge.



A rolled-top edge is common in sock traditions that used garters to keep the cuffs in place.



Devin found garter-stitch heels surprisingly comfortable to wear.

Notions Markers (m); stitch holder; tapestry needle.

Gauge 40 sts and 56 rows = 4" (10.2 cm) in St st on smaller needles.

Finished Size Foot, 15¼" (38.7 cm) long and 10" (25.4 cm) in circumference.

- This version of the pattern is adapted for a smaller gauge and larger finished sock with less leg shaping than Carrie Brezine's original version. The original version has a finished foot circumference of 8¼" (21 cm), includes more leg shaping, and is worked at a gauge of 32 sts and 44 rows = 4" (10.2 cm). Subscribers can find the original version at LT.Media/Magdalena.

SPECIAL PATTERNS

Stripe

Rnds 1-3 With MC, knit.

Rnds 4-6 With CC1, knit.

Rep Rnds 1-6 for patt.

Checkerboard: (multiple of 6 sts)

Note Work checkerboard patt until you run out of sts at the end of each rnd, which might not complete a patt rep.

Rnds 1-3 *K3 with MC, k3 with CC2; rep from * to end of rnd.

Rnds 4-6 *K3 with CC2, k3 with MC; rep from * to end of rnd.

LEG

With larger needles and MC, CO 100 sts. Place marker (pm) and join in the rnd.

Knit 4 rnds. Change to smaller needles.

Work in k2, p2 rib for 8 rnds. Change to larger needles.

Work Rnds 1-6 of Stripe patt 4 times (24 rnds).

Work 4 rnds in Stripe patt.

Dec rnd Maintaining Stripe patt, knit to last 3 sts, k2tog, k1—1 st dec'd.

Dec rnd Maintaining Stripe patt, k1, sl 1, k1, pssso, knit to end—1 st dec'd.

Rep last 6 rnds 2 more times—94 sts rem.

Join CC2. Work Rnds 1–6 of Checkerboard patt.

Break CC2.

Work Rnds 4–6 of Stripe patt.

Work Rnds 1–6 of Stripe patt 6 times. Break CC1.

With MC, knit 1 rnd.

HEEL

Note Setup for the heel is different for right and left stockings to position the decreases on the inside of the leg.

Heel is worked back and forth in rows with MC as foll.

Heel Flap (left stocking only)

Knit 1 rnd. Remove m. Turn work.

Next row (WS) Sl 1 pwise wyf, k46, place rem 47 sts on holder for instep—47 sts rem for heel.

Heel Flap (right stocking only)

Next row (RS) K47, place rem 47 sts on holder for instep, remove m—47 sts rem for heel. Turn work.

Next row (WS) Sl 1 pwise wyf, knit to end.

Both Stockings

Slipping first st pwise wyf, knit 44 more rows, ending with a WS row—23 ridges total.

SHAPE HEEL

Row 1 (RS) Sl 1 pwise wyf, [k9, k2tog] 4 times, k2—43 sts rem.

Row 2 and all WS rows Sl 1 pwise wyf, knit to end.

Row 3 (RS) Sl 1 pwise wyf, [k8, k2tog] 4 times, k2—39 sts rem.

Row 5 Sl 1 pwise wyf, [k7, k2tog] 4 times, k2—35 sts rem.

Row 7 Sl 1 pwise wyf, [k6, k2tog] 4 times, k2—31 sts rem.

Row 9 Sl 1 pwise wyf, [k5, k2tog] 4 times, k2—27 sts rem.

Row 11 Sl 1 pwise wyf, [k4, k2tog] 4 times, k2—23 sts rem.

Row 13 Sl 1 pwise wyf, [k3, k2tog] 4 times, k2—19 sts rem.

Row 15 Sl 1 pwise wyf, [k2, k2tog] 4 times, k2—15 sts rem.

Row 17 Sl 1 pwise wyf, [k1, k2tog] 4 times, k2—11 sts rem.

Row 19 Sl 1 pwise wyf, [k2tog] 4 times, k2tog—6 sts rem.

Row 21 Sl 1, k2tog, pssso, pm for new beg of rnd, k2tog, return st to left-hand needle and pass 2nd st on left-hand needle over it, return rem st to right-hand needle—2 sts rem. Do not turn.

GUSSET

Next rnd With RS facing, pick up and k32 sts (1 st in each sl st) along the edge of the heel flap, k 1st instep st from holder, pm, k45 instep sts from holder, pm, knit last instep st from holder, pick up and k32 sts (1 st in each sl st) along the edge of the heel flap, k1—113 sts.

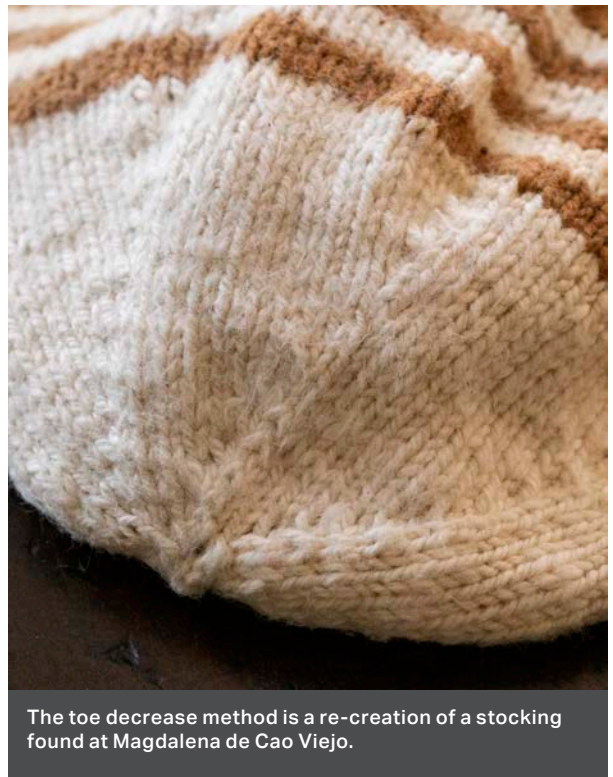
Right Stocking Only

Knit 1 rnd.

Both Stockings

Join CC1. Beg with Rnd 4, cont in Stripe patt and shape gusset as foll.

Dec rnd Knit to 2 sts before m, k2tog, sl m, knit to



The toe decrease method is a re-creation of a stocking found at Magdalena de Cao Viejo.

next m, sl m, sl 1, k1, pssso, knit to end—2 sts dec'd.

Rep Dec Rnd every other rnd 10 more times—91 sts rem.

FOOT

Work 34 rnds even in patt, ending with Rnd 6.

Join CC2. Work Rnds 1–6 of Checkerboard patt. Break CC2.

Beg with Rnd 4 of Stripe patt, work 33 rnds in patt or to 2" (5 cm) less than desired length of foot, ending with Rnd 6. Break CC1. Cont with MC only.

TOE

Knit 1 rnd.

Dec rnd [K11, k2tog] 7 times—84 sts rem.

Knit 2 rnds.

Dec rnd [K10, k2tog] 7 times—77 sts rem.

Knit 2 rnds.

Dec rnd [K9, k2tog] 7 times—70 sts rem.

Knit 2 rnds.

Dec rnd [K8, k2tog] 7 times—63 sts rem.

Knit 2 rnds.

Dec rnd [K7, k2tog] 7 times—56 sts rem.

Knit 2 rnds.

Dec rnd [K6, k2tog] 7 times—49 sts rem.

Knit 2 rnds.

Dec rnd [K5, k2tog] 7 times—42 sts rem.

Knit 1 rnd.

Dec rnd [K4, k2tog] 7 times—35 sts rem.

Knit 1 rnd.

Dec rnd [K3, k2tog] 7 times—28 sts rem.

Knit 1 rnd.

Dec rnd [K2, k2tog] 7 times—21 sts rem.

Knit 1 rnd.

Dec rnd [K1, k2tog] 7 times—14 sts rem.

Dec rnd [K2tog] 7 times—7 sts rem.

Dec rnd [K2tog] 3 times, k1—4 sts rem.

Break yarn, leaving a 6" (15.2 cm) tail. Thread tail through rem sts and pull tight to close.

FINISHING

Weave in ends. ●

The Oldest Knitting in the New World

by Carrie Brezine

Learn more about Magdalena de Cao Viejo, the Peruvian community that lived there, and the knitted artifacts they left behind. Visit LT.Media/Magdalena to find Dr. Brezine's article and original pattern published in *PieceWork* January/February 2014.



Photo by Carrie Brezine


Resources

Brezine, Carrie. "Magdalena de Cao Viejo Stockings." *PieceWork*, January/February 2014, 15–17.


———. "The Oldest Knitting in the New World." *PieceWork*, January/February 2014, 11–14.

Carrie Brezine has a PhD in anthropology and studies pre-Columbian and early colonial Andean textiles and mathematics. She is especially interested in the ways in which technical textile skills were used to express personal identity. Her analysis of the textile collection from Magdalena de Cao Viejo, Peru, provided a critical dataset for her dissertation, "Dress, Technology, and Identity in Colonial Peru." She thanks principal investigator Dr. Jeffrey Quilter for giving her the opportunity to study the textiles from the site. The staff at the Museo Cao, especially Carmen Gamorra de la Cruz and Arabel Fernández López, were very helpful, and Meredith Keffer's photographs have proved invaluable to Carrie's continuing study of the Magdalena collection. In September 2012, Carrie presented a version of this article to the 13th Biennial Symposium of the Textile Society of America in a paper entitled "Knitting a New World."

Devin Helmen has been immersed in fiber since learning to spin at age eight. They spin, knit, and weave in beautiful Minnesota. Devin enjoys writing and teaching about fiber arts and has a passion for spindles and everyday textiles. They blog, intermittently, at afewgreenfigs.blogspot.com.



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The author is shown wearing the Veela lace shawl by Libby Jonson.

Photos by Dan Waltin unless otherwise noted

Knitting with Linen

JOSEFIN WALTIN

Many of you may have heard of the Berta's Flax project, started by Christiane Seufferlein in Austria. A neighbor gifted her a dowry chest filled with flax grown and prepared in the 1940s. Berta was the name of the woman who had once owned the chest. Christiane posted on social media, asking fellow spinners if they would like to have some of Berta's flax. In early 2021, Christiane started shipping Berta's flax stricks to spinners, and she was then contacted by other families who had flax dowries. A long line of Austrian women's flax dowries have now been passed through Christiane to enthusiastic spinners around the world wanting to honor the memory of Berta and her flax-dowry sisters. I was one of those spinners.

In one of the numerous articles about the project, Christiane was pictured wearing a plant-fiber shawl that I later learned was knitted from Nepalese nettles. I admired the shawl and played with the idea of knitting a similar one for myself.

The sometimes century-old Austrian flax has an exquisite quality. All the steps from sowing and growing to retting and processing have been performed with remarkable skill and dedication. And why shouldn't they have been?—this was vital life insurance for the women of the time. I spun my strick of Austrian flax with love and reverence in the shade on my balcony during a couple of summers. I bought a flax wheel that I decided to call Henrietta, after one of my Austrian great-grandmothers. Her daughter, my grandmother Elly, came to Sweden from Vienna with the Red Cross buses after World War I at the age of 14. She quickly fell in love and stayed in Sweden, leaving her mother and her best friend behind. My great-grandmother took the train numerous times from Austria to Sweden to visit her daughter. Later, Elly took the train to Austria with her family to visit her childhood friend, who later became my other grandmother.

FLAX TO LINEN

I hadn't spun very much flax at the time; I didn't think I was good enough to allow myself to handle the antique golden fibers that had been grown and prepared with such skill. But this was the time. I had grown my own flax for eight years, and I couldn't hide



Photo by Josefijn Waitin

behind my high standards anymore. I read a lot and came across literature that described how flax fibers naturally turn counterclockwise. For that reason, the recommendation was to follow the natural twist in the fibers and spin it in the same direction. And so I did. As I didn't trust my flax-spinning skills enough to use the yarn as singles yet, I plied it clockwise.

My original plan for the yarn was to weave with it. However, the memory of Christiane's nettle shawl poked me with a firm rhythm, and I decided to realize my plan to knit something similar. The linen yarn was the perfect candidate for the project. I found a pattern with a chevron lace center and a lace edge with columns of yarnovers that resemble knitted fringe. I started to knit the lace edge on the train to Austria with my family later that summer. As the thread went through my quite exhilarated fingers, I thought about Henrietta and my grandmother and how they must have missed each other; about the two childhood friends, my grandmothers, who met in the Austrian lake district of Salzkammergut with their own families in the 1950s; and about my parents who, after having fallen in love, made the same train rides between Vienna and Stockholm to see each other in the early 1960s. My reflections on the moving train knitted themselves into the open lace through southern

BEFORE



The Z-plied yarn in the lace edge at the beginning of the shawl has been almost entirely unplied.



Chevron lace main pattern at the beginning

AFTER



The second lace edge with more twist added to the yarn



Chevron lace with more twist added to the yarn

Sweden, across the flat landscapes of Denmark and Germany, and down to the beginning of the Alps in southern Bavaria, to arrive 24 hours later at our destination of Salzkammergut, not so far from the soil that once had nurtured the flax as well as my grandmothers and my father.

Knitting with linen yarn is quite different from knitting with wool. Linen yarn has no elasticity, no give. Fingers that are used to an accommodating wool yarn will be slightly offended by the brusque pull of its linen cousin. I realized that a shawl of the size I was knitting wouldn't be finished in a heartbeat and that it would benefit from the company of a parallel project. After all, a treasure like this can't afford to be left unfinished due to sore fingers.

The lack of elasticity of linen gives the fabric a drape that is unachievable with wool yarn. Compared to commercial linen yarn, the drape of handspun linen yarn will reveal itself as even more dramatic due to its weight. Throughout the summer,

I have giggled underneath the impressive length of that lacy textile, feeling like a queen wrapped in a smooth and cooling magic mantle, from my knitting hands down to my toes.

In the slow progress of working through the lace structure, I had time to observe the details. It dawned on me that the two plies of my yarn had settled next to each other in the fabric rather than twisting. My yarn was spun and plied in the opposite direction of a regular knitting yarn. As I was knitting, I therefore inevitably unplied my clockwise-plied linen yarn. What's more, the knitted fabric objected and leaned the other way in protest, leaving a biased fabric. However, in my eagerness to see the fabric unfold between my hands, I had started knitting before I had enough yarn. After having discovered my somewhat embarrassing biasing mistake, I added extra plying twist to the rest of the skeins to save the remaining part of the shawl from the fate of an uncomfortable angle. The chevron lace stayed straight, while the end "fringe" was a little less

biased than at the beginning. As I later blocked the finished shawl, the bias relaxed and doesn't really show to the untrained eye.

Since early in my spinning life, I've known—the hard way—that my mistakes are a map of what I have learned. This is, of course, true for my linen shawl, too: every time I see those parallel singles in the ply, I am gently reminded that my knitting yarn shows its most flattering side when it is spun clockwise and plied counterclockwise. Also, I spun the yarn from skeins from different chests of the Austrian flax. At one end of the linen shawl, the color of the flax is slightly darker than the rest of the shawl. And that is how flax works. Depending on weather, location, retting, and climate, the color can differ between harvests. It is a sweet reminder that flax is a natural material and that nature is perfect in its imperfection.

THREADS OF CONNECTION

I write this in midwinter. Sometimes I sneak into my wardrobe to cuddle with the linen shawl. Every time I stroke my hands across the lace, I am taken back to that rocking train, back to my roots and the train rides through generations, back to my family crossing borders to be together.

While in Austria that summer, I spent a day in Salzkammergut with Christiane. She wore the lace shawl I had admired so. I showed her my lace knitting and told her about the inspiration behind it. She instantly took off her shawl and gave it to me, and I treasure it. This year, Christiane came to Sweden, and we spent a day together, she in another Nepalese nettle shawl and me in my finally finished Austrian linen lace shawl. ●

Resources

Berta's Flax, facebook.com/groups/279258827044398.
Bertas Flax: International Flax Guild, bertas-flachs.at.

Josefin Waltin started spinning in 2011. She is a spinning teacher, offering lectures and workshops both online and in person, mainly in spindle techniques and processing raw fleece into finished yarn. Josefin is a freelance writer, publishes instructional and documentary-style videos, and manages a spinning blog from her home in Sweden at waltin.se/josefinwaltinspinner.



Christiane Seufferlein and Josefin met in Stockholm on a summer day. Christiane is wearing another Nepalese nettle shawl and Josefin is wearing her finally finished linen shawl.

Photo by Josefin Waltin



Josefin bought more Austrian flax from Christiane when they met in Austria.

Photo by Josefin Waltin



Annemor and a few of the sweaters she rescued from the ragpile

Photos courtesy of Schiffer Publishing

Treasures from a Ragpile

Norway's Knitted Heritage

ANNEMOR SUNDBØ

Author, knitter, and spinner Annemor Sundbø has been a champion of Norwegian knitting for more than four decades. She has written many books, lectured internationally—including at SOAR (Spin Off Autumn Retreat) in the 1990s—and worked to help connect today's knitters with the makers and motifs of the past. In particular, her dedication to Norwegian Setesdal sweaters with their iconic white “lice” motifs and colorful embellishments helped to fuel an interest in Norwegian knitting and embroidery.

Her newest book, Norway's Knitted Heritage: The History, Surprises, and Legacy of Traditional Nordic

Sweater Patterns, has been translated into English by another longtime friend of Spin Off, Carol Huebscher Rhoades. Check out the book for more on the sweaters discussed here and so much more. One of my favorite things about Norwegian sweater traditions is how these garments include so much more than knitting. Some styles include elements such as embroidery, woven bands, or even handsewn linings pieced from reused cloth. These sweaters are a trove of inspiration for an adventurous handspinner!

We are excited to share an abridged excerpt of Norway's Knitted Heritage with you here.

—Editor

RECYCLING AND RETELLING

The circumstances were such that, during midsummer in 1983, I became the owner of a shoddy mill. Shoddy is an English word for shredded fiber of waste woolen materials, an industrial term for recycled wool. The consequence was that I recycled wool for twenty-six years. Almost daily, I picked out worn-out items from a raw materials bin, “a ragpile,” holding over 16 tons, the remains of garments that reflected our knitting traditions from an entire century. This was a unique opportunity to gain insight into our folk knitting tradition. I have literally spun out knitting-history threads from old local traditions, some of which led me to foreign cultures and faraway skies. I also gained insights into past beliefs about otherworldly powers and origin myths reflected in folk art.

Cultural Treasures in a Ragpile

Worn-out and torn knitted garments were recycled into new wool products. But the ragpile also resulted in a unique collection of over 500 sweaters, 300 stockings, and 1,200 gloves and mittens. In addition, I saved about 110 pounds (50 kilos) of wool swimming outfits, an unknown number of undergarments, children’s clothes, doll clothes, blankets, and other fragments of wool. I called this collection “Treasures from a Ragpile.”

My sweater collection illustrated the vastness of styles in Norwegian knitting art in the twentieth century. When I now reproduce a collection of charts with panels and figure motifs, it is in the hope that this national treasure can inspire and serve as a backdrop and a resource for everyday knitters, professional designers, and Norwegian tricot or knitting mills. The book should be useful for selecting elements from the past and bringing knitting traditions into the future with a better understanding and respect for the symbolism of the motifs and the meaning of the historical sweater garments.

To unwind threads from worn-out garments in a ragpile is as if to listen to narratives where the teller’s voice becomes more and more indistinct while the story itself becomes distinct. On the modern network, the “World Wide Web,” I can pick up an older thread

end and wind myself out from the near past, through the Middle Ages, and backward to ancient times. On the internet, you can find lead threads to those that formed historical knitting patterns, which we can still see in our inherited sweater traditions. The heritage is not only about threads formed as knitted stitches, in a play between different colors. It is also about magic, stories, and powers tied to the use of the sweaters and connections between the ways of thinking in the past, myths, and beliefs. My ragpile collection represents an average of what knitted garments were worn, from outermost to innermost on the body, through most of the twentieth century. With knitted pullovers and cardigans as the starting point, I want to show what has been produced in our Norwegian knitting tradition and pattern styles.

My ragpile collection represents an average of what knitted garments were worn, from outermost to innermost on the body, through most of the twentieth century.



“Lice sweater” from Setesdal from Annichen Sibbern’s 1929 book, *Norske strikkemønster* (Norwegian Knitting Designs, first English edition, 1965). This is the first lice sweater pattern published in a knitting book with charts.

Torrival Tweed and Wool Comforter Factory was the last shoddy mill in our country where customers could exchange knitted wool for new items. As the new owner, I was faced with a double responsibility. First, I had to keep the wheels running so as not to

eradicate part of our industrial history. On the other hand, I couldn't eradicate the vast richness of our national knitting traditions. It was a life's task to convey both pattern and history to our time, but also to maintain the knowledge so it could be used by future generations.

The remains of knitted garments with a rich pattern diversity, which I rescued from being destroyed, were really meant to be filling in quilts/comforters, sleeping bags, and mattresses or spun into new weaving yarn for blankets and tweed. The rag remnants represented knitted art that had wandered from generation to generation but was also a starting point for annihilation. It was never the idea that it would, at some time, be exhibited at museums and in art galleries or be shown in books and at lectures all over the world. The wool rags did not have any other value for their previous users than as for new items in exchange. Many customers were glad that their wool garments could be remade into new items. It was also a way to avoid throwing away something that held many memories and had a lot of work behind it.

THE DAWNING OF THE NORWEGIAN SWEATER STYLE

Knitting is a relatively new textile handcraft in Norway. Sweaters are part of the modern folk costumes, but they have a prehistory influenced by social development, industrialization, politics, economy, and, not least,



Daniel Torsson Fodtveit (1859–1939) has "rhombuses" over his shoulders as well as zigzag panels at the top and bottom of the sleeves. The fact that the white section is showing below the waist for the photo shows that this section below the waist didn't necessarily have to be hidden and was not made to save dyed yarn or reduce time-consuming pattern knitting. White wool had always been more expensive and rarer than dyed wool, until the new white sheep breeds were introduced by spinning mills at the end of the nineteenth century.



Around 1985, I began collecting knitted remnants and sweaters considered as “treasures from the ragpile.” Eventually, it crystallized into different sweater styles connected to various geographical regions such as Fana (*left*) and Setesdal (*right*).

religious beliefs. Even if knitting has been in our country for over 500 years, the past 250 years have especially shaped today’s sweater style.

Norwegian sweater style is an important part of our national identity. Local costume traditions, together with designers from the woolen mills, have put sweaters on the Norwegian map. Almost all the traditional and newly created sweater models have been named after Norwegian small places, valleys, and regions—without there necessarily being some connection to the places the sweaters are named after.

The oldest sources we have tell us that knitted sweaters were not really Norwegian but originally came from other countries. Newspaper advertisements from the eighteenth century show that wool sweaters came to the coastal villages as commercial goods and became a sort of “work uniform” for seamen. Wool sweaters were good for wearing when wind and rain hit at sea.

Another trace can be found in customs registries, where you’ll find references to silk knitted shirts or tunics, an upper-class fashion going back to the seventeenth century.

We do not know for certain exactly when and why modern sweaters in local patterns appeared in inland towns. Some sweaters were meant to be worn under military uniform jackets, others were considered as undergarments under work clothes, while still others became part of the local folk costumes and were worn as festive garments.

My ragpile did not have many garments from the nineteenth century, but the pattern motifs were handed down from sweaters worn by fishermen and trappers, outdoor workers, soldiers, and seafarers. Most of the garments stem from nineteenth-century patterns, which were sometimes followed slavishly or sometimes only partially copied. In some cases, a pattern seems to be absent, an emergency solution that relied on the imagination to use up and extend a limited amount of yarn in various colors, so the garment would fit as well as possible in accordance with the period’s style. Other sweaters were embellished with an unbelievable creative urge and creativity, with a combination of techniques and inlaid patterns.

Place-Name Sweaters

Most sweater patterns with placenames were designed in the early twentieth century. They seldom had a local connection but were designed by the spinning mills, where they were given a number and random geographical name.

Before wool mills were established in Norway in the nineteenth century, the pattern motifs wandered into regions from hand to hand by being knitted. So, they acquired a local style but were seldom true copies of each other, such as, for example, the knitted sweaters from Setesdal, Torridal/Iveland, and Fana. These sweaters are considered as the classics.

Spotted Sweaters

Many older people in Setesdal say that the word “lice” has been used for the “spots” as long as this knitted garment has been worn in the valley. The earliest written documentation I’ve found that could describe a lice pattern is in a prison record from 1860, which noted that an Austad man was brought in after bodily harm, wearing “a knitted, spotted Sweater.”

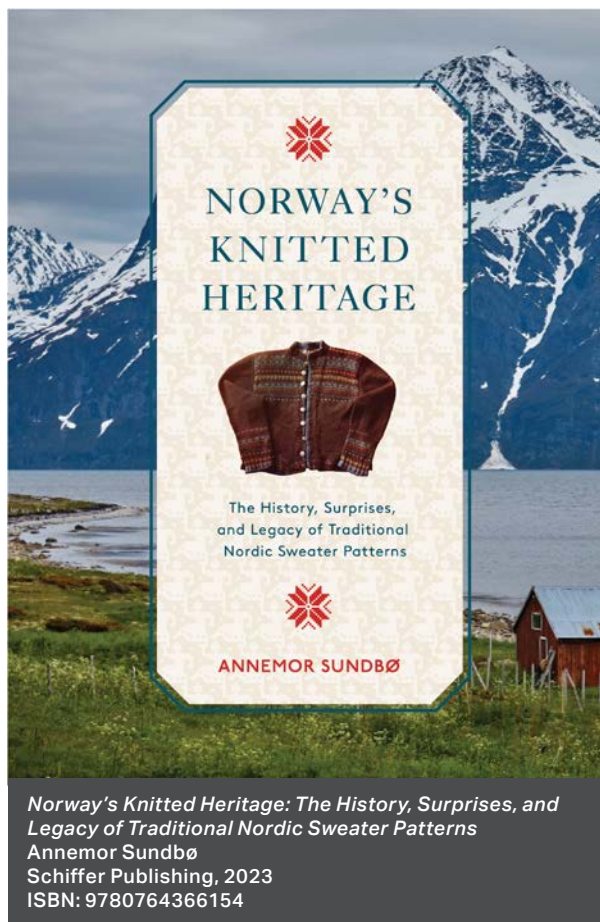
In the *Berlingske Haandarbejds-Bog, Naal og V.v I Leksikon* (*Berling’s Handcraft Book, Needle and Weaving Encyclopedia*), 1943, the following description is found: “A lice sweater is a Designation for a stockinette-knitted Sports sweater with Pattens in several Colors and worn by Adults as well as Children. The name comes from Norway. At the Museum on Bygd., there is a knitted Lice sweater belonging to the Setesdal Folk costume. It is certainly this that has given the Idea that all over Scandinavia, the now-so-favorite Sports sweaters are of the same Name.” The photo caption says: “Lice sweater. This Sports sweater, which originated in Norway, is knitted with strong, clear Colors, preferably red, blue, and white, against a dark background.”

The Ancestry of Striped Sweaters

Striped sweaters also filled a lot of space in my ragpile. A large number of variations of these are what we now call Fana sweaters. Striped sweaters were mentioned in old newspapers. Artists in the nineteenth century reproduced a number of variations of sweaters with stripes, although, most likely, the earliest were imported from England and Denmark.

Striped sweaters were often worn under marine uniforms, but, otherwise, seafarers all along the European

The smallest motif to be used in the art of knitting, the lice pattern, became an important design element and a symbol of Norwegian patterned knitting.



coast wore them as undersweaters. Nevertheless, Fana, outside Bergen, gave its name to a garment that had knitted lice within stripes, checkerboard squares on the cuffs, and eight-petal roses on the shoulders. They were either white and blue striped or striped in natural brown, almost black. The choice of background color could vary from sweater to sweater, but if the lower body was white, the background color was always white. At the beginning of the twentieth century, patterns were written for these sweaters, and they became very popular all around Norway. The sweater could be either a cardigan or a pullover, and the white lower section of the body could, instead, have ribbing in the background color or about 4 inches (10 centimeters) of checkerboard squares. Eventually, ski sports developed as an activity for everyone, particularly after the Second World War, and the Fana sweater became the people’s most cherished ski pullover. ●

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Handknitted sweater (2015.004.001) in the Vesterheim collection, finished with cloth facings and handwoven band

Courtesy of Vesterheim National Norwegian-American Museum, Decorah, Iowa

On the Edge

A Pick-Up Band to Weave

ANGELA K. SCHNEIDER AND KATE LARSON

Many traditional Norwegian sweaters are knitted in the round and then cut open to form a cardigan. Sometimes, the cut edges are reinforced with colorful woven bands. Applying narrow woven bands to handmade or thrifted garments can add structure to an edge, reinforcement to a row of buttons, and a great pop of color!

The sweater shown here from Vesterheim National Norwegian-American Museum in Decorah, Iowa, was knitted in Norway and sold through Husfliden (Norwegian Handcraft Association) in Bergen. The front and neck edges are finished with a handwoven band created with what is commonly called “Baltic pick-up” in wool and linen or cotton. This simple seven-pattern thread motif is easy to weave on either an inkle loom or with a backstrap-style rigid heddle. Weaver Angela K. Schneider wrote up the pattern for the Vesterheim sweater band to share with you here.

Many pick-up bands are woven with yarns of more than one fiber and color. This makes a great spinner’s challenge! We’ve included very basic weaving instructions here for this pattern, but the color, fiber, and motif options are endless.

If you need help with the basics of warping and weaving Baltic-style pick-up bands, check out Angela’s new course, *Baltic Pick-Up on the Inkle Loom*.

—Kate Larson

WEAVING PICK-UP BANDS

Baltic-style pick-up bands are threaded with a pattern end in every third thread (see Inkle Draft). Pattern threads that are thicker or softer than the background threads fill the gaps between pattern floats, creating a colorful motif.

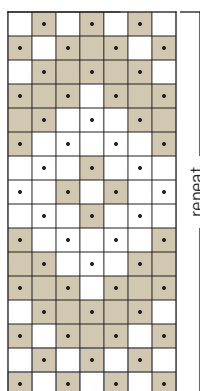
Pick-up charts show only the pattern ends, and you read the chart from the bottom up—in the direction

you are weaving. On each row, adjust the pattern ends (gold wool threads shown here) to match the chart: shaded ends up and blank ends down. Don't adjust any of the background ends, just let them weave in their natural shed.

Charts for Baltic weaving are often, but not always, shown with a grid of dots. The dots help you keep track of your weaving by indicating pattern threads that are naturally up in a row. Start your pick-up on a row that matches the dots in the first chart row, then you only have to adjust the threads that don't match their natural position. A shaded dot stays up, a blank square stays down, a shaded square without a dot gets picked up, and an unshaded dot gets pushed down.

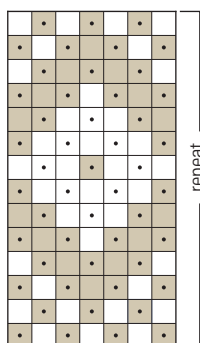
The handwoven Vesterheim sweater band includes a few variations in the pick-up pattern, so we added two here for you to try. Alternating motifs along a band or using different motifs for the collar and edging will only add more charm to the woven accent on the sweater. ●

Pick-Up Chart



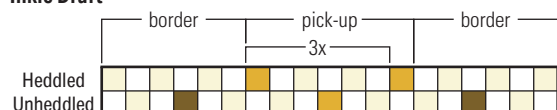
■ Pattern end up
□ Pattern end down
● Dot indicates pattern ends naturally up in the shed.
Note: Charts show pattern ends only.

Chart Variation



□ Background, cream
■ Pattern, gold
■ Border, brown

Inkle Draft



Read inkle drafts from left to right, as they are threaded. Heddled and unheddled ends can be reversed on an inkle loom or threaded in slots and holes on a rigid heddle.



Detail of handsewn buttonhole and woven band

Photo by Kate Larson

Resources

- Foulkes, Susan J. *Weaving Patterned Bands: How to Create and Design with 5, 7, and 9 Pattern Threads*. Atglen, PA: Schiffer, 2018.
- Larson, Kate. *Backstrap Rigid Heddle Basics: Start Weaving Handspun Bands*. youtu.be/7M3omYQG9Q.
- Torgenrud, Heather. *Norwegian Pick-Up Bandweaving*. Atglen, PA: Schiffer, 2014.

Angela K. Schneider, project editor for *Spin Off*, is a fan of all textile arts and usually weaves her pick-up bands on an inkle loom.

Kate Larson, editor of *Spin Off*, teaches handspinning around the country and loves weaving handspun pick-up bands on a backstrap-style rigid heddle.

Baltic Pick-Up on the Inkle Loom

With Angela K. Schneider

This new online course teaches you the basics for getting started with Baltic-style pick-up patterns, including read-



ing a chart, starting and ending bands, and weaving efficiently. learn.longthreadmedia.com/courses/baltic-pick-up-on-the-inkle-loom



Photos by Matt Graves

Keep an easy-to-wear shawl on hand for cool evenings and overly air-conditioned offices.

Roundabout Shawl

JENNIFER MILLER COMSTOCK

As a knitter, I have always enjoyed squishy, unfussy garter stitch. But as a handspinner, I absolutely *adore* garter stitch. It is smooth and meditative to work and produces a soft, reversible fabric that doesn't curl; and its simplicity will allow the colors and textures of your precious handspun to take the spotlight.

As a designer and math lover, though, it's the squareness of garter stitch that appeals to me. Each two-row ridge of garter stitch is equal to one stitch in width, leading to all sorts of right-angled and mitered possibilities that don't require a lot of counting once you get some stitch markers in place. This shawl is a result of playing with those possibilities and the goal of fitting a flat piece of knitting around a three-dimensional body. I named it the Roundabout, after the three right-angled turns it makes as it wraps around the wearer's shoulders.

SPINNING NOTES

When designing for handspun yarn, I aim to leave room for a range of thicknesses and yarn quantities, considering the natural variance of handspun. The two yarns I used for this shawl were not quite the same thickness, but they worked out nicely by alternating the ridges. Even if I had used a much thinner yarn with the same size needles, I could create a delightfully light and voluminous shawl after blocking it firmly. For a finer-gauge yarn and not-so-airy fabric, see the pattern notes about calculating a different gauge.

I used two different fibers for the shawl. The first was a set of hand-dyed Bluefaced Leicester tops from Frabjous Fibers called Three Feet of Sheep, which contains 11 pieces of different-colored tops; the Candy Shoppe colorway I used consisted of semisolids as well as speckle-dyed colors. I started by dividing each of the 11 pieces in half, one half-set for each bobbin of singles. The only other preparation was dividing each piece lengthwise into about six thinner pieces before spinning. I spun two bobbins using my Lendrum plying flyer, each in the same sequence, knowing that they would align approximately, but not perfectly, when plied. The finished two-ply skein therefore has softened, gradual transitions between colors. To stretch my gradient yardage into a full-size shawl, I spun an

undyed blend of Bluefaced Leicester and tussah silk into a slightly plumper two-ply yarn.

This top-down shawl can be worked successfully as a scarf or wrap if you have a smaller yarn quantity. Just use the yarn you have, knit until you have used almost all of it, and then bind off. The shape of the Roundabout Shawl lends itself well to self-striping or gradient yarns such as the one I used here, and it would be really fun as a stash-busting, scrappy project!

MATERIALS

Fiber 50% Bluefaced Leicester wool/50% tussah silk (Worsted Spinning New England), undyed natural light-and-dark mix, 14 oz (397 g).

Three Feet of Sheep Gradient 100% Bluefaced Leicester (BFL) wool (Frabjous Fibers and Wonderland Yarns), Candy Shoppe, 8 oz (227 g).



Jennifer's rainbow gradient scarf was knitted from a Frabjous Fibers batt she spun and chain-plied.



Yarn Undyed (MC): 2-ply worsted weight (900 ypp; 11 wpi), 750 yd.

Gradient (CC): 2-ply DK weight (1,050 ypp; 12 wpi), 525 yd.

Needles Size 10½ (6.5 mm): 29"–40" circular. Adjust needle size if necessary to obtain the correct gauge.

Notions Markers (m); tapestry needle.

Gauge 12 sts and 28 rows = 4" in striped garter st, gently blocked.

Finished Size 30¼ (9¼)" long at center back, 20½ (6¾)" knitting depth.

Visit spinoffmagazine.com/spin-off-abbreviations for terms you don't know.

Notes

- This piece is worked from the front and neck edge down to the lower edge. Instructions are for the full-size shawl, with changes for the scarf in parentheses.
- References to color changes apply to the shawl only. The scarf was knitted with a single gradient skein.
- If you wish to use yarn of a different gauge, multiply your gauge in stitches per inch (S) by 50 for the shawl (56 for the scarf), then add 3 stitches; this will be your cast-on number. Find a worksheet on the next page.
- The shawl will drape better if your gauge is on the loose side for your yarn. Be sure to swatch for the feel of the fabric as well as for gauge.

STITCH GUIDE

Elastic Bind-Off:

Note: This BO uses about 2½ times the length of yarn used on the previous row.

Bind off K1, *k1, return both sts to left needle and k2tog tbl; rep from * to end.

SHAWL (SCARF)

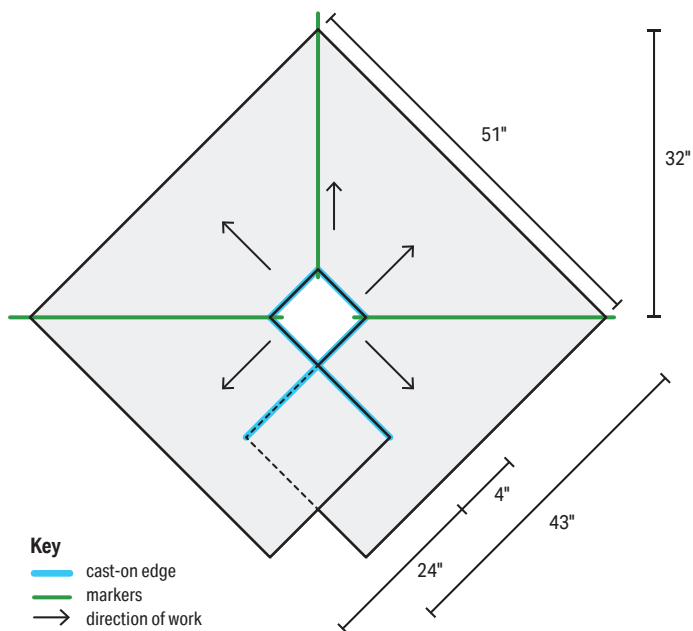
With MC, CO 153 (171) sts. Knit 4 rows.

Set-up row (RS) K63 (72), pm, k13, pm, k13, pm, k64 (73).

Next row (WS) Knit.

Change to CC; do not break MC.

Frabjous Fibers Three Feet of Sheep in the Candy Shoppe colorway on Bluefaced Leicester combed top



Gauge Freedom: Adjust the Pattern

You can easily adjust this pattern to suit your handspun and the fabric density you like best. Start by knitting a swatch, wash and block it as you typically would for a finished project, and measure your gauge in stitches per inch (**S**) and rows per inch (**R**). Then, follow these easy formulas depending on whether you are knitting the shawl or scarf versions. If necessary, adjust stitch counts so the total number of stitches in the set-up row matches the number of cast-on stitches.

Shawl:

Cast on _____ sts.
(50 × S) + 3

Set-up row Knit _____, pm, k _____, pm, k _____, pm, k _____.
21 × S (4 × S) + 1 (4 × S) + 1 (21 × S) + 1.

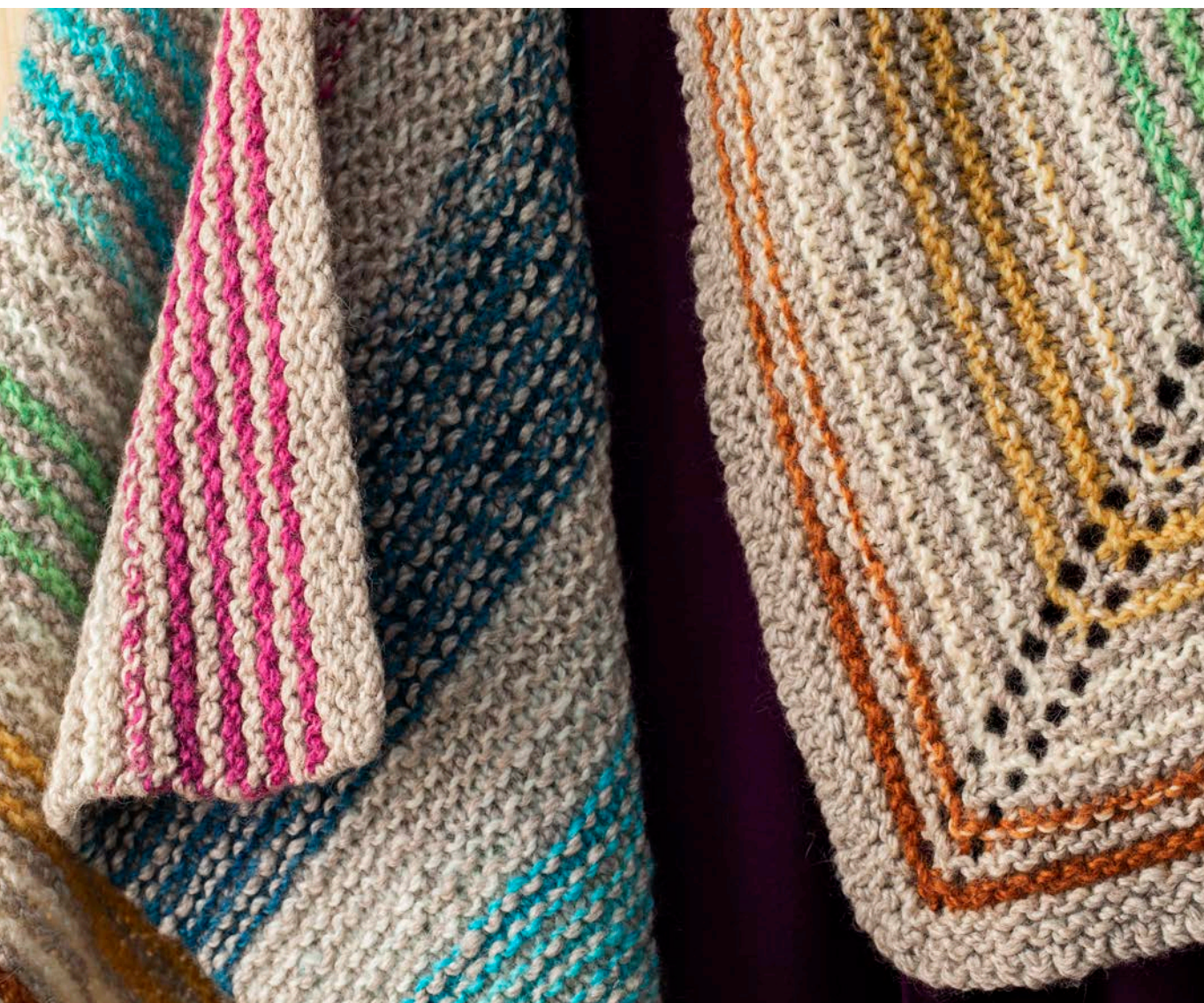
Rep Inc row and Next rows _____ more times or knit to desired width.
9½ × R

Scarf:

Cast on _____ sts.
(56 × S) + 3

Set-up row Knit _____, pm, k _____, pm, k _____, pm, k _____.
24 × S (4 × S) + 1 (4 × S) + 1 (24 × S) + 1.

Rep Inc row and Next rows _____ more times or knit to desired width.
2½ × R



Inc row (RS) *Knit to m, yo, sl m, k1, yo; rep from * 2 more times, knit to end—6 sts inc'd.

Next row (WS) Knit.

Rep last 2 rows 66 (18) more times and, at the same time, change color at beg of every RS row, carrying unused color up the side of piece—555 (285) sts: 130 (91) sts before first m, 147 (51) sts in each center section, 131 (92) sts after last m.

Knit 3 rows even. With WS facing and using the Elastic Bind-Off (see Stitch Guide), BO all sts.

FINISHING

Weave in ends. Wash, then block to measurements while damp. ●

Resources

Frabjous Fibers and Wonderland Yarns,
frabjousfibers.com.

Worsted Spinning New England, millwool.com.

Jennifer Miller Comstock earned degrees in fiber arts and architecture from the University of Washington, both of which inform her current work as a fiber artist. She still lives and works in the beautiful Pacific Northwest, where it is (delightfully) sweater weather all year. Find Jennifer, along with more of her projects and patterns, as *otterness* on Ravelry.



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Three-ply crêpe

Photos by Matt Graves

Soft Stripes

A Spinner's Recipe for Self-Striping Yarn

KATE LARSON

Handpainted combed tops with colors that flow from one to the next can be so beautiful that they seem like finished creative works all on their own. Braids often spend time hanging in my studio or curled happily in baskets where I can enjoy them long before spinning. Oh, the maker's life!

There are many ways we can spin these combed tops to create yarns that echo the color progressions created by the dyer. Chain-plying and fractal spinning are both great choices for spinning intentionally self-striping yarns. Recently, I wanted to create a self-striping yarn that combined the dapples and overall consistency of marled yarns with the clear stripes we get when spinning singles or chain-plying. I started exploring a crêpe construction, and after a few test samples, this recipe quickly became one of my favorites. I was ready to put it into action with a large project—the Bari Tee.

CONSTRUCTION

“Crêpe” can refer to many different things in the textile world, but here, I’m using it as described in *The Spinner’s Book of Yarn Designs*. As a three-ply yarn, it

is composed of two Z-spun singles that are plied with S-twist as usual. Then a third singles—S-spun this time—is plied with the two-ply. This means that the third ply rests on the surface of the two-ply, making it more visible and pronounced. It’s a fabulous place for a bit of silk or precious fiber.



COLOR

I chose the crêpe construction because I wanted to mix three elements: a striping singles, a nonstriping singles that mixes colors throughout, and a singles of something different in color and texture to spice things up. The striping singles is spun straight from the combed top. Splitting the fiber into strips will create shorter stripe sequences, so you can adjust for your fiber and project.

The nonstriping singles is created with a marl technique. First, split the combed top into strips. When you are ready to spin, select at least two strips and orient them so different colors are in the drafting zone together. The more colors that will be mixed into the singles, the more blended and consistent the marl effect.

For the third singles—the wild card—I like to use a different fiber and sometimes a different color. In exploring this soft-stripe recipe, I've been surprised by how different the color can be and still create a unifying effect that doesn't interrupt the stripes. Unbleached tussah is one of my favorite fibers to explore for this third element (see the top swatch on page 50). Have fun and sample!

A STRIPED BARI TEE

Sarah Solomon's sweater design (find the pattern on page 52) is perfect for playing with stripes. It is knitted bottom-up in four pieces—front, back, and two sleeves—and Sarah envisioned this as a transitional season piece with great drape. There's no shaping in the body until you reach the shoulder and neckline, which means that stripes or any color changes in your handspun will be more consistent throughout.

I started with a delicious Merino/cashmere/tussah blend dyed by Lisa Souza for my striped and marled singles. I decided I wanted a dark blue stripe in my sequence, too, so I spun a small chunk of blue combed top in the same blend each time I came to the deep purple section in my striping sequence. Make your stripes your own!

I wanted my marl ply to be quite mixed, so I split the combed top into very small strips and held three as I spun with a short-forward (worsted) draw. And for my third ply, I used a dyed tussah silk top from Treenway Silks. This was a smooth, easy spin using a long draw and spinning from the fold. This S-spun singles was finer than the other two because I was concerned about obscuring the soft stripes. However, they

Kate's Soft-Stripe Recipe

1. Spin one striped singles with Z-twist and set aside.
2. Spin one marled singles with Z-twist and set aside.
3. Spin one crêpe singles with S-twist and set aside.
4. Ply the striped singles and the marled singles together with S-twist.
5. Send the resulting two-ply through your wheel again to charge it with additional S-twist.*
6. Ply this high-twist two-ply with the crêpe singles using Z-twist to create a balanced yarn.
7. Wash or steam your yarn before evaluating your work.

* This can be done as part of Step 4, but doing two passes tends to be more consistent. The two-ply must have a strong, active S-twist in order to ply with the third singles in Step 6.



came through quite clearly, and I was happy with the effect of the stripes in the final garment. This lightweight sweater is as easy to knit as it is to wear! ●

Resources

Anderson, Sarah. *The Spinner's Book of Yarn Designs: Techniques for Creating 80 Yarns*. North Adams, MA: Storey, 2012.

Lisa Souza Knitwear and Dyeworks, Merino/cashmere/tussah in South Pacific and Lapis, lisaknit.com.

Treenway Silks, Salt Spring Island tussah silk combed top in Vesuvius Bay, treenwaysilks.com.

Kate Larson, editor of *Spin Off*, teaches handspinning around the country and spends as many hours as life allows in the barn with her beloved Border Leicesters.



Photos by Matt Graves

Bari Tee

DESIGN BY SARAH SOLOMON; HANDSPUN PROJECT BY KATE LARSON

This sweater is simplicity itself—simple texture, simple knitting, and a light fabric that feels great against your skin. I originally designed this sweater for a luxurious baby yak and silk yarn, but many fibers and blends can be used to create a light, shawl-like fabric that can be layered or worn on its own. Heavier yarns

will create a more substantial fabric, but drapery fabrics will make the basic shapes of this design shine.

—Sarah Solomon

Learn more about Kate Larson's handspun version of this sweater on page 50.

MATERIALS

Fiber Merino/cashmere/tussah (50% superfine Merino/25% Mongolian Cream cashmere/25% tussah silk; Lisa Souza Knitwear and Dyeworks), South Pacific, 9 oz (255 g). Salt Spring Island tussah silk combed top (100% tussah silk; Treenway Silks), Vesuvius Bay, 3½ oz (100 g). Merino/cashmere/tussah (Lisa Souza Knitwear and Dyeworks), Lapis, 1½ oz (43 g). *Note:* These are the amounts needed for size #3 sample and extra for swatching; adjust for other sizes or fibers.

Yarn 3-ply sportweight (1,570 ypp; 14 wpi), 1,120 (1,120, 1,130, 1,400, 1,530, 1,660) yd.

Needles Size 5 (3.75 mm): 32" or longer circular (cir) and spare needle for main body; size 3 (3.25 mm): 16" and 32" cir for ribbing (see Notes). Adjust needle size if necessary to obtain the correct gauge.

Notions Markers (m); stitch holders or spare cir; tapes-try needle; removable markers or knitter's pins.

Gauge 22 sts and 36 rows = 4" (10 cm) in Seedling Stitch on larger needle.

Finished Size Bust: 35 (38½, 42, 46, 49½, 53)" (88.9 [97.8, 106.7, 116.8, 125.7, 134.6] cm).

Sweater shown (size #3) measures 42" modeled with 3" of positive ease. Intended to be worn with 3"–6" positive ease.

Visit spinoffmagazine.com/spin-off-abbreviations for terms you don't know.

Notes

- Front and back pieces are worked back and forth from the bottom up.
- Shoulders are joined using a decorative modified three-needle bind-off, and then sleeves are picked up from the body pieces and knitted flat toward the cuff.
- Use a spare needle the same size as the main-body needles for the modified three-needle bind-off.
- Side and underarm seams are sewn with mattress stitch, and a minimal ribbed collar is picked up from the neck edge and worked in the round.
- Circular needles are used to accommodate the large number of stitches, but the knitter's preferred needles for flat knitting may be substituted.

- Right and Left Shoulder refers to the garment as it is worn, not as it may appear when knitting.
- Keep one stitch at each edge in garter stitch for selv-edge to aid with blocking and seaming.

STITCH GUIDE

SEEDLING STITCH (even number of stitches)

Row 1 (WS) *K1, p1; rep from * to last 2 sts, k2.

Row 2 (RS) *K1, p1; rep from * to last 2 sts, k2.

Row 3 (WS) *K1, p1; rep from * to last 2 sts, k2.

Row 4 (RS) Knit.

Rows 5, 6, and 7 K2, *p1, k1; rep from * to end.

Row 8 Knit.

Rep Rows 1–8 for pattern.

TEE BACK

With ribbing needles (suggested size US 3/3.25 mm) and using the long-tail method, cast on 96 (106, 116, 126, 136, 146) sts.



A modified three-needle bind-off creates a decorative seam down the shoulder slope.

Ribbing

Next row (WS) K2, *p1, k1; rep from * to end.

Rep last row 4 more times, ending with a WS row.

Next row (RS) K1, purl to last st, k1.

Main Body

Change to main body needles (suggested size US 5/3.75 mm).

Work in Seedling Stitch (see Stitch Guide) until piece measures 12¼ (12¼, 13¼, 14¼, 14¼, 14¼)" from cast-on edge, ending with a WS row.

Note: To assist with measuring armhole depth and sleeve placement, place a removable marker in fabric at each side of the last row worked.

Work even until armhole measures 6 (6½, 7¼, 7¾, 8½, 9)" ending with a WS row.

Note: For neatest results, use the sloped bind-off method throughout the neck and shoulder shaping sections (see Special Techniques on page 56).

Shape shoulders and neck:

BO 3 (3, 4, 4, 4, 4) sts at beg of next 2 rows—90 (100, 108, 118, 128, 138) sts rem.

Next row (RS) BO 3 (3, 3, 4, 4, 4) sts, work until there are 33 (37, 40, 43, 48, 53) sts on right needle and place these sts on holder or spare cir for right shoulder,

BO 18 (20, 22, 24, 24, 24) sts, work in patt to end—36 (40, 43, 47, 52, 57) sts rem for left shoulder.

Note: Neck and shoulder shaping are worked at the same time; read the following sections all the way through before proceeding.

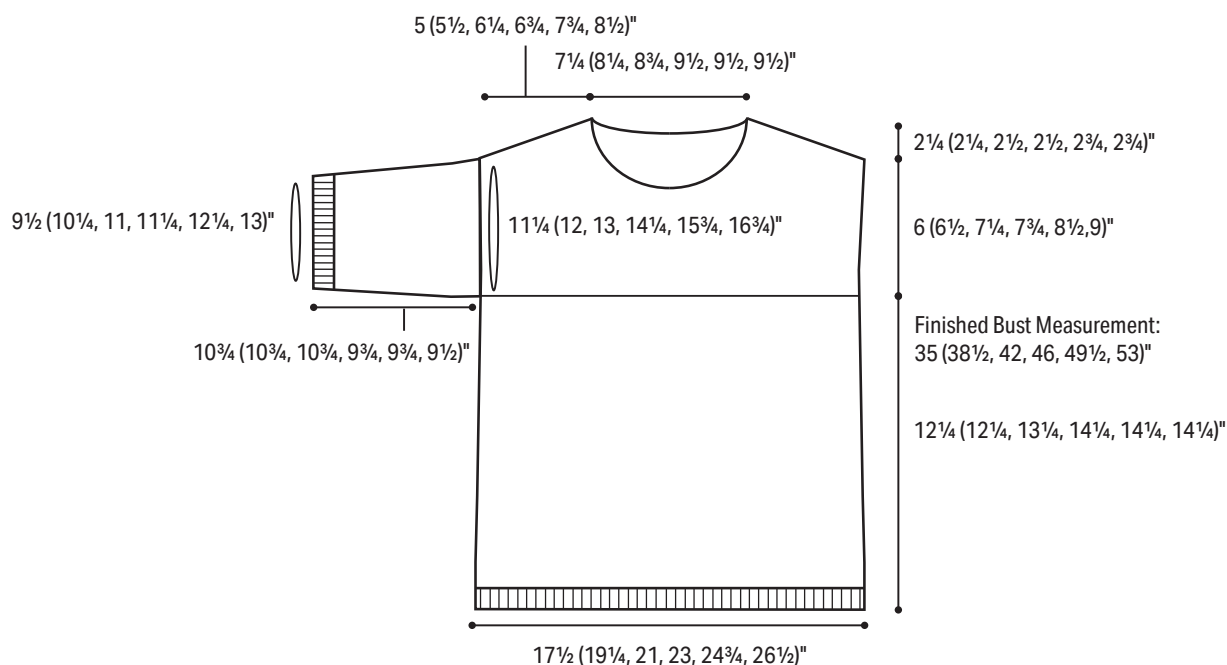
Left shoulder At beg of WS rows, BO 3 (3, 3, 4, 4, 4) sts 7 (9, 10, 3, 5, 10) times, then BO 2 (0, 0, 3, 3, 3) sts 2 (0, 0, 7, 6, 1) time(s) and, at the same time, at beg of RS rows, BO 4 sts once, then BO 2 sts 2 (3, 3, 4, 4, 4) times, then BO 1 st 3 (3, 3, 2, 2, 2) times—no sts rem.

Right shoulder Return 33 (37, 40, 43, 48, 53) held right shoulder sts to needle and, with WS facing, rejoin yarn. At beg of WS rows, BO 4 sts once, then BO 2 sts 2 (3, 3, 4, 4, 4) times, then BO 1 st 3 (3, 3, 2, 2, 2) times and, at the same time, at beg of RS rows, BO 3 (3, 3, 4, 4, 4) sts 6 (8, 9, 2, 4, 9) times, then BO 2 (0, 0, 3, 3, 3) sts 2 (0, 0, 7, 6, 1) time(s)—no sts rem.

FRONT

Work as for back until armhole measures 4¾ (5¼, 6, 6¼, 7¼, 7¾)" ending with a WS row.

Note: For neatest results, use the sloped bind-off method throughout the neck and shoulder shaping sections (see Special Techniques on page 56).



Shape neck and shoulders:

Next row (RS) Work 42 (45, 49, 53, 58, 63) sts and place these sts on holder for left shoulder, BO 12 (16, 18, 20, 20, 20) sts, work in patt to end—42 (45, 49, 53, 58, 63) sts rem for right shoulder.

Right shoulder Work 1 WS row.

Note: Shoulder shaping begins before neck shaping ends; read the following section all the way through before proceeding.

At beg of RS rows, BO 4 sts once, then BO 3 sts once, then BO 2 sts 2 times, then BO 1 st 3 (4, 4, 5, 5, 5) times.

At the same time, when armhole measures 6 (6½, 7¼, 7¾, 8½, 9)", ending with a RS row, shape shoulder as foll: At beg of WS rows, BO 3 (3, 4, 4, 4, 4) sts once, then BO 3 (3, 3, 4, 4, 4) sts 7 (9, 10, 3, 5, 10) times, then BO 2 (0, 0, 3, 3, 3) sts 2 (0, 0, 7, 6, 1) time(s)—no sts rem.

Left shoulder Return 42 (45, 49, 53, 58, 63) held left shoulder sts to needle and, with WS facing, rejoin yarn.

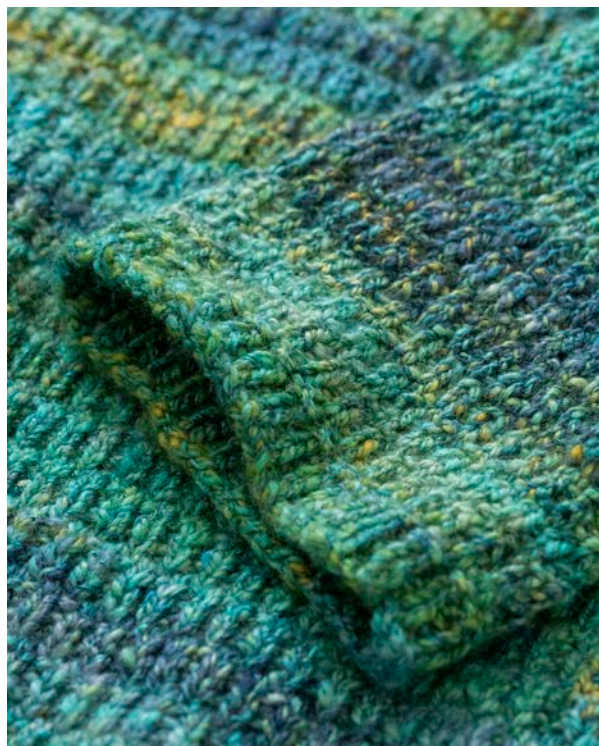
Note: Shoulder shaping begins before neck shaping ends; read the following section all the way through before proceeding.

At beg of WS rows, BO 4 sts once, then BO 3 sts once, then BO 2 sts 2 times, then BO 1 st 3 (4, 4, 5, 5, 5) times. At the same time, when armhole measures 6 (6½, 7¼, 7¾, 8½, 9)", ending with a WS row, shape shoulder as foll: At beg of RS rows, BO 3 (3, 4, 4, 4, 4) sts once, then BO 3 (3, 3, 4, 4, 4) sts 7 (9, 10, 3, 5, 10) times, then BO 2 (0, 0, 3, 3, 3) sts 2 (0, 0, 7, 6, 1) time(s)—no sts rem.

JOIN SHOULDERS

Note: Right and Left in this section refer to the garment as it is worn.

Block pieces to measurements and allow to dry completely. With main body needles and RS facing, pick up and knit 28 (30, 34, 37, 42, 47) sts across back right shoulder edge. With RS facing and spare needle in same size, pick up and knit 28 (30, 34, 37, 42, 47) sts across right front shoulder edge. Hold needles parallel to one another with wrong sides of pieces touching and right sides facing out; the join will deliberately form a decorative welt stitch on the outside of the



garment. For a smooth chain stitch on the shoulder seam, join sts using the modified three needle bind-off (see Special Techniques on page 56); alternatively, use the traditional three-needle bind-off for a different result. Pick up and join sts for left shoulder in the same manner.

SLEEVES

With main body needles and RS facing, pick up and knit 62 (66, 72, 78, 86, 92) sts evenly spaced between armhole markers. Work in Seedling Stitch for 15 (15, 11, 7, 7, 7) rows, ending with a WS row.

Dec row (RS) K1, k2tog, work to last 3 sts, ssk, k1—2 sts dec'd.

Rep dec row every 16 (16, 12, 8, 8, 8)th row 4 (4, 5, 7, 8, 9) more times—52 (56, 60, 62, 68, 72) sts rem.

Work even until piece measures 10¼ (10¼, 10¼, 9¼, 9¼, 9)" from pick-up row, ending with Row 3 or 7 of pattern.

Next row (RS) K1, purl to last st, k1.

Change to ribbing needles.

Next row (WS) *K1, p1; rep from * to last 2 sts, k2.

Rep last row 3 more times.

BO all sts in pattern.



NECKBAND

With 16" cir ribbing needles and RS facing, beg at right shoulder seam, pick up and knit 52 (56, 58, 60, 60, 60) sts along back neck and 74 (76, 78, 80, 80, 80) sts along front neck—126 (132, 136, 140, 140, 140) sts total. Place marker and join in the round.

Purl 1 rnd.

Next round *K1, p1; rep from * to end of rnd.

Rep the last rnd 4 more times.

BO all sts in pattern.

FINISHING

Block sleeves. Sew side seams beginning at lower edge. Sew sleeve seams beginning at cuff. Weave in ends to WS.

SPECIAL TECHNIQUES

Modified Three-Needle Bind-Off

Holding needles parallel with wrong sides together, [slip first st on front needle kwise wyf, bring yarn to front, p1 from back needle, bring yarn to back, pass slipped st over purl st] 2 times—2 sts on right needle; pass second st on right needle over first—1 st on right needle; *slip first st on front needle kwise wyb, bring yarn to front, p1 from back needle, bring yarn to back, pass slipped st over purl st, pass 2nd st on right needle over first; rep from * to end.

Sloped Bind-Off

On last row before bind-off, slip last st pwise without working it.

BO row [Slip 1 pwise] 2 times, pass second st over first to BO 1 st, BO rem sts as usual.

Wet-Blocking

Fill a basin with cool water and a small amount of no-rinse wool wash or delicate soap. Immerse the garment and allow to soak for at least 20 minutes. Remove the garment, refill the basin with fresh water, and rinse. Squeeze as much excess water from the piece as possible, then wrap it in a towel and press on it firmly to remove remaining water. Reshape the garment on a blocking board and pin to schematic dimensions using T-pins. Allow to air-dry completely. ●

Resources

Lisa Souza Knitwear and Dyeworks, lisaknit.com.
Treenway Silks, treenwaysilks.com.

Sarah Solomon is a knitwear designer, writer, and teacher based in New York City. She enjoys creating garments and accessories from exceptional yarns that are knittable, wearable, and designed to last. In addition to her self-published work, Sarah has worked as part of the editorial team of *Vogue Knitting* magazine and as Director of Knitwear Design for Harrisville Designs, a historic woolen mill in New Hampshire. Find Sarah's patterns on Ravelry or her website, sarahsolomondesigns.com, and follow her work on Instagram @intothewool.

Kate Larson, editor of *Spin Off*, teaches handspinning around the country and loves exploring new-to-her combos of fibers, yarn designs, color effects, and cozy sweaters.



Kim used five breeds of wool dyed in the Morning Glow colorway by Crafty JAK's.

Photos by Matt Graves unless otherwise noted

The Finish Line

Wool Wet-Finishing from Soaking to Thwacking

KIM MCKENNA

Creating a yarn that complements the project we plan to make involves choices at key junctures in our process. These choices can, and will, affect the character of our handspun. When working with wool, our first consideration is our choice of breed. Breed factors in when looking for specific attributes in our yarn, such as elasticity, luster, and strength. Another consideration is the intended end use for our yarn.

The choice of fiber preparation and drafting method also plays a part in the character of our handspun. Working with handcards, we can create rolags, which, coupled with a woolen draft, result in beautifully lofty yarns with good elasticity. On the other hand, reaching for our wool combs to create

combed top that can be spun with a worsted draft results in compact yarns with the best possible drape, strength, and luster.

What about finishing? Are we as thoughtful when it comes to how we finish our handspun? How does handspun finished with a simple warm-water soak compare to a yarn finished with a good thwacking? I'll explore four methods here, but remember to keep things in context. When you read or hear about another spinner's finishing methods, it is important to look at the whole process, ranging from fiber choice and preparation to spinning and finishing. Both fiber and yarn construction affect how the yarn behaves during finishing—it's all connected.

If you are concerned about color bleeding for dyed fibers, use cooler water temperatures, around 32°–38°C (90°–100°F), or stick with the Soak Method. Adding a few color-catcher sheets to water basins during finishing will help corral any stray dye if needed. Test any finishing method on a small sample of your handspun to make sure you are happy with the results.

FOUR WET-FINISHING METHODS

To explore four wet-finishing methods, I selected five combed tops from different sheep breeds. I predrafted the fiber and spun using a backward-worsted draft at a 6.2:1 wheel ratio. I finished a small skein of each of the five fibers using the following methods.

Soak Method

For this gentle approach, I fill a basin with warm water—about 43°–49°C (110°–120°F)—add a few drops of soap, and then leave the skeins to soak in the water/soap solution for 1½ hours.¹ When the time is up, I transfer the skeins to a second basin containing warm rinse water and leave them to soak until the water is completely cooled.

Final steps: I give the yarn a gentle rinse in more cool water and squeeze out excess water. I snap each skein a few times to straighten the strands before laying them on a cotton towel to wick away any excess

moisture. After a few hours, I straighten, but not stretch, the skein before suspending it in a doorway between two curtain extension rods. Because wool shrinks as it dries, I move the bottom rod up several times as it dries and remove the skein from the rods while it is still slightly damp to the touch.

Kim's Stovetop Method

Not long after I began dyeing, I noticed that my handspun, hand-dyed yarn had a better hand, more loft, and better elasticity than the handspun I finished using my normal Soak Method. This led to some experimentation and the discovery of this Stovetop Method.

I soak the skeins for 1½ hours in a saucepan containing a warm-water/soap solution. When the time is up, I move the saucepan to a heat source and slowly increase the temperature. When finishing a woolen-spun yarn, I remove the saucepan from the heat source once the temperature reaches 77°–79°C (170°–175°F), which is just below a simmer.² If finishing a worsted-spun yarn, I keep the yarn at this temperature for about 10 minutes before removing it from the heat source. My thought process here is that the water can more easily penetrate the airy woolen yarn than it can the more compact worsted-spun yarn.

After removing the saucepan from the heat source, I leave the skeins to cool in the saucepan until the water is about 50°C (about 120°F). I then transfer the



Unfinished sample skeins (from left): Targhee, Polwarth, Shetland, Bluefaced Leicester, Perendale

yarn to another container filled with rinse water of the same temperature and follow the same final steps as in the Soak Method.

Hot/Cold Method

This method relies on a temperature gradient to create a change in the surface and handle of handspun wool. For easier transfer between the hot- and cold-water baths, I tie a thick white shoelace through the center of the skeins to use as a handle. If you have heat-sensitive hands, you might also wish to wear rubber gloves.

I soak the skeins in a water/soap solution as hot as my hand can stand 50°–60°C (about 120°–140°F). After 40 minutes, I lift the skeins from the hot-water bath and give them a gentle squeeze to remove the excess liquid. I empty the basin, refill it with hot water (without soap), and prepare a second basin filled with cold water. Holding the skeins by the shoelace, I dunk the skeins up and down four to six times in the second basin. After their cold-water dunkings, I give the skeins a squeeze to remove the cold liquid before subjecting them to four to six dunks in the hot-water basin. I alternate between the hot- and cold-water dunks a total of six times. Any time the water in the hot-water basin drops below 43°C (110°F), I empty the basin and refill it with hot water. By the same token, if the cold-water basin starts to warm up, I empty and refill the basin with more cold water. The skeins rest for about 40 minutes in the final cold-water bath before they are removed and dried as described in the final steps above.

Thwacking Method

The fibers and blends that benefit the most from thwacking are short-staple fibers that are prepared and spun woolen, such as baby camel, bison, yak, and other short-staple animal fibers. Thwacking is an aggressive process in which a wet skein is smacked against a surface to help the short fibers bloom and have better cohesion within the yarn. However, this method is not the best finishing approach for all fibers. The samples I tested had medium-length staples and were between 20 and 33 microns.

Mason Jar Tip

To mitigate any yarn tangling during the Soak and Stovetop Methods, I place a water-filled mason jar in the center of the skein while it soaks. This makes it easy to find the skein's center and allows it to be lifted neatly from the water.



Photo by Kim McKenna

Before thwacking, I place the skeins in a basin containing a warm-water/soap solution where they soak for 40 minutes. When the time is up, I transfer the skeins to a second basin containing 43°C (110°F) rinse water and allow them to rest for 20 minutes before I start thwacking.

There are different approaches to thwacking. Because wool is weaker when wet, my preference is to avoid actions that overstretch the yarn. If I am dealing with a sportweight or heavier yarn, I gather the skein into a ball and throw the sopping-wet ball repeatedly into a laundry tub or bathtub. To ensure the entire skein is thwacked as evenly as possible, I change the orientation of the skein before each throw. If working with a singles or fine, delicate yarns, I start by twisting the skein and folding it in half (like a loose hank) before thwacking it against my kitchen island. To thwack as evenly as possible, I untwist, adjust,

	TARGHEE	POLWARTH	SHETLAND	BLUEFACED LEICESTER	PERENDALE
SOAK METHOD					
KIM'S STOVETOP METHOD					
HOT/COLD METHOD					
THWACKING METHOD					

and retwist the skein a few times during thwacking. Thwacking continues until the yarn is sufficiently cohesive as the fibers bloom and entangle.

RESULTS AND OBSERVATIONS

The samples from the Soak Method demonstrated the least amount of change compared to their unfinished counterparts. This method helped to even out the twist a bit and resulted in yarns with good loft, elasticity, and hand.

The Stovetop Method resulted in light, airy yarns with very good elasticity, incredible loft, and a nice soft hand. This method also helped to even out the twist.

Compared to the Thwacking Method, the Hot/Cold Method rendered yarns that had better loft, were more elastic, and were not quite as dense. Compared to the Soak and Stovetop Methods, the Hot/Cold Method gave the yarn better cohesion and resulted in a slightly denser yarn. This method also evened out the twist.

The thwacked yarns were denser, scratchier, and not very elastic. These yarns did, however, have very

good cohesion, and the density would prove useful when a hard-wearing yarn is needed.

Finishing can deeply influence the character of our handspun. It is every bit as important as our choice of breed, fiber preparation, spinning draft, and ply structure. What I learned from this set of samples is that I would choose the Hot/Cold or Thwacking Method for a hard-wearing yarn. To maintain or improve the hand of the yarn, I would consider using the Soak or Stovetop Method. For improved loft and elasticity, I might choose the Stovetop Method.

The way we decide to finish our handspun can amplify loft, encourage cohesiveness, add firmness, increase elasticity, enhance luster, or change the hand of our yarn. Put these methods to the test for yourself and see what finishing choices you will make for your next project. ●

Notes

1. Kim suggests using a pH-neutral, colorless detergent. When finishing skeins of washed wool, only a small amount of detergent is needed. Adjust the amount if scouring skeins spun in the grease or skeins containing sticky residue from processing.
2. Some hand-dyers do not recommend exposing their dyed fibers to water this hot. If you are concerned about color bleeding, use the Soak Method.

Resources

Crafty JAK's, Targhee, Fine Polwarth, Shetland, Bluefaced Leicester, and Perendale, craftyjaks.ca.

Curiosity is what propels **Kim McKenna's** fiber journey. She constantly strives to improve her fiber preparation and spinning skills. Kim teaches workshops through SweetGeorgia Yarns, both in person and through the online School of SweetGeorgia. She also teaches silk spinning at retreats and workshops for Sanjo Silk. You can follow her at claddaghfibreats.com and on Instagram @claddaghfibreats.





Bright colors and strong textures can help smooth your travel days.

Photos by Matt Graves
unless otherwise noted

Fly Away

Spinning for Your On-the-Go Knitting Projects

ANDREA DECK

*For road warriors—whether traveling for work or for fun—it can be hard to take our hobbies with us. A full-size spinning wheel, such as my Louet S10, hardly fits in my carry-on bag for my high-travel job. A few years ago, yearning for my wheel while stuck on the tarmac in some state I couldn't even name, I realized I needed to add a more portable facet to my handspun hobby. Some folks find incredible ways to spin on the road using e-spinners or drop spindles. For me, I needed to find some time to *use* all that handspun I was making.*

What kind of handspun project makes a perfect companion when traveling by plane, train, or automobile? I've learned to keep in mind the size of the project, total materials needed, difficulty of pattern, and ability to stand up to being toted around.

SIZE

I gravitate toward small projects for the road and love knitting with a worsted- or chunky-weight yarn on the plane. Short projects that can be completed in

about the length of travel, without any fiddly extras or multiple skeins, can be an excellent choice. Recently, I spun up a chunky-weight rainbow to make cupcake hats for my niece and nephew. I used a dyed braid that I chain-plied to keep the colors separate and bright. The roundness afforded by the chain ply allows for clear and consistent stitch definition. When I started knitting my project, the color play was unplanned and really fun to watch flowing from my needles.

Socks are a fun road project, melding interesting twists and turns with small size. I look for a fiber or blend that balances durability and washability; think Highland wool, superwash, or a nylon blend. Spun into a sock-weight yarn with at least three plies, this handspun will have clear stitch definition and high durability. I usually bring my short, bamboo ChiaoGoo circular needles for the plane; they've never been flagged and are small and light to pack. I prefer magic loop for most projects, so I rarely have to bring more than one needle. If I need to change needle

sizes within a project, I try to pack interchangeable needles. Just make sure to keep all your tools contained so you don't lose a tiny double-pointed needle or stitch marker behind your seat!

TEXTURE

Bobbles, beehives, and other "wild plying" techniques are a great option for travel. An on-the-go experience often allows me to have focused time with my yarn close at hand and not running away on my couch or with the dog, so a more intentional placement of beehives is easy to accomplish. Textured yarns are often knitted with very simple stitch motifs, so that means I can work without having to focus on memorizing or bringing instructions for a stitch sequence. Usually a good ol' garter stitch can make a beehive or bobble yarn a good choice for a scarf or shawl.

By plying a singles spun thick-and-thin with a thread, you can really use wild, interesting colors that won't be affected or muddled by the ply structure.

Tips for Flying with Your Knitting

- Check local regulations: At the time of writing, US domestic and international flights technically allow knitting needles of all sizes in both checked and carry-on luggage. I say "technically" because sometimes this can be an issue in carry-ons. Circular needles, bright colors, or nonmetal (plastic or bamboo) needles often pass through security a little easier, in my experience.
- Keep it small: If you're packing scissors or other tools, keep all blades under 3 inches. Those cute circular thread cutters are a great way to get around this one.
- Keep it contained: Many of us have experienced the joy of our whole bag getting dumped out unceremoniously in the security line to find whatever looked sketchy during screening. Keeping all your knitting, crochet, or other tools together with your yarn in a zippered pouch can make this part a lot easier.
- Pack what you need: Leave the rest at home or in your checked luggage. Carrying on fewer needles or tools or less yarn will hopefully make the process a little easier.



Courtesy of Andrea Deck



The Traveler's Tool Kit

Here are a few must-have tools that Andrea recommends for your handspinner's knitting go-bag:

- Zippered project bag
- Safety pins
- Small tape measure
- Stitch markers
- Needle-point protectors
- Scissors with blades shorter than 3 inches

When plying these handspun textures, I've used traditional crochet thread or even metallic heavy quilting thread to provide strength and a pop of shine! I try to lock in each bobble, but it isn't difficult to slide one up or down a bit to make sure it's sitting where I want when knitting.

COMPLEXITY

Projects with intricate lace or delicate stitches can also travel well, especially with a neck light or if you know you'll have good lighting. A single-color, two-ply, laceweight Merino/silk blend with a repeating stitch that I can easily memorize? A great fit for a long train ride! The small-gauge yarn allows me to bring a whole shawl's worth of yarn in a little bag. With my locking stitch markers stuck onto the outside of that same bag, I'm ready to tackle some light and airy stitches.

Often the lighting is less clear on the go, but I can

give the project more attention than if I were also chatting with a friend or watching TV. Sitting on a plane or train lends itself to moving bobbles around or playing with crazy colors, but it can sometimes be difficult for more intricate colorwork. In general, I spin to fly by trying to incorporate all the things I want into one yarn.

STRENGTH

You may have noticed a lot of talk about plying so far, and, honestly, it's because I'm not an organized traveler. That yarn may wind up battered around in a bag or suitcase or pulled against a zipper or two. The delicate singles that I am very nervous about felting? Not a great fit for my on-the-go knitting.

This is one of the reasons I suggest that you plan your project in advance of your spin. Even if many of us spin for the joy of it and not for a final project, it can

be helpful to think through a travel project, select fiber, and decide on twist and ply before beginning.

READY TO RIDE

No matter where or how you're traveling, there are a few tried and true things about spinning for knitting on the go. A bit of planning can be a huge help. I have a small knitting bag that I can easily switch from my carry-on backpack to my day bag or my snack bag for the car with no issues. I have needles, stitch markers, correct yardage all caked up, and a printed pattern if needed—all snuggled up in this to-go bag. It's always a joy to have everything in one place, but it's even more important when you're on the go. ●

Andrea Deck is a fiber artist, community builder, and Washington, DC, local. She is lucky to be able to pursue all of her fiber whims—from dyeing, weaving, spinning, and knitting to researching her traditional craft roots—and looks forward to continuing to learn and grow with the fiber community.



Photo by Joe Coca

Project Ideas from *Spin Off*

Find these in the *Spin Off* library at spinoffmagazine.com/library.

- Lida Rose Socks
- Chameleon Shawl
- Morning Surf Scarf
- Helix Scarf
- Locked Up Bag
- Seawall Scarf



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GreenwoodFiberworks.com





Shifting shades spun from natural-color Merino fleeces

Photos by Matt Graves

Ooh La La Ombré

Blend, Spin & Knit Your Fade

SYLVIA SMITH

As I sipped a cup of morning coffee and perused the *Spin Off* website to see what the upcoming themes were for submissions, my brain lit up when I saw “handspun handknit” as the theme for Summer 2024. I recently completed coursework for Master Spinner Level 3 through Olds College, which included an assignment to create an ombré yarn. My process was fresh in my mind, and I was anxious to see how these yarns would work in knitted motifs. Ooh la la! The ombré was one of my favorite assignments, and I was excited to re-create my yarn and see the effects in a knitted piece.

In color theory, a *shade* is color mixed with black, making the resulting hue darker. Depth of shade, in color terms, is a measurement of the amount of black. *Ombré* is a term spinners use to describe a skein that moves in measured blends from one color to another.

A skein might start as red at one end and move through various hues of violet before it ends in blue at the other end. The violets in the midsections of the yarn are a result of incremental mixing of the red and blue.

The ombré yarn that I created for my homework and this article uses natural-color wool, moving in measured shades from white to the brownish gray of French roast coffee. I used wool from two Merino neck fleeces that I acquired from local shepherds catering to fiber artists. Each fleece was quite fine and soft, with a staple length of 3 to 3½ inches (7.6 to 8.9 centimeters). I chose these because of their similar characteristics and striking natural contrast. I was intrigued by the subtly different grays that could be produced by adjusting the amounts of the dark gray and white in a mixture. I am also interested in the

visual appeal of a monochromatic yarn used with an interesting knitting pattern.

As I stated earlier, depth of shade is a type of measurement. To produce the desired ombré effects, I needed to precisely weigh my fiber. I decided to do 10% shifts from 100% white to 100% French roast gray. Rather than doing long sections of each shade, I chose to make short sections and repeat the ombré effect three more times, for a total of four fades from white to dark gray in my skein. I use a gram scale because I find measuring fiber in grams makes the math easier when working at this level of precision. Large percentage shifts between shades would appear more obvious, and I was looking for soft and subtle. I wanted the visual qualities of this yarn to match the physical qualities of the fibers. I weighed out my fibers in a total of 2-gram allotments as follows; 10% of 2 grams is 0.2 grams, so the shades shifted by 0.2-gram increments.

Since these are such subtle shifts, I placed each bundle of weighed fiber in a baggie marked with its content

and order in the lineup. There were 11 baggies containing 2 grams of fiber each for one section of my ombré, and I made up a total of four sets. My yarn starts with the pure white, continues through the pure dark gray, and then repeats by starting again with the white.

I was working with small amounts of fine fiber, so I blended each allotment on my handcards. By charging the carding cloth lightly (not pushing the fiber deep into the cloth), I could card the fine fibers gently. Blending this way also provided an opportunity to remove residual vegetable matter from these beautiful neck fibers. Once the color blend appeared homogeneous, I doffed the fiber into rolags and returned the rolags to the labeled baggie. I made two rolags for each 2-gram blend.

Even though a rolag is a classic woolen preparation, I spun them using short-forward draw. I felt that spinning from a rolag would provide additional blending in the draft, while using short-forward draw smooths the fibers and provides better definition in the yarn. I spun on a double-treadle wheel set up for scotch tension



Sylvia's finished skein was about 111 yards (102 meters) with four gradient repeats.

Sylvia's Ombré Recipe



2 grams white,
0 grams dark
gray

1.8 grams white,
0.2 grams dark
gray

1.6 grams white,
0.4 grams dark
gray

1.4 grams white,
0.6 grams dark
gray

1.2 grams white,
0.8 grams dark
gray

1 gram white,
1 gram dark
gray

using a 10.75:1 ratio. My draft length was slightly longer than 1 inch (2.5 centimeters), and I set the tension pretty light. I spun all four repeats of white moving to French roast gray as one continuous singles yarn because my intention was to create a chain-plied yarn.

I chose to chain-ply the singles yarn rather than spin three singles and ply them together because I think a chain-plied yarn—also a three-ply yarn—is less likely to demonstrate significant barber poling as the shades change. Chain plying also ensured that I would use all of the singles yarn to create my plied yarn without having leftover singles on a bobbin. I rewound my singles yarn so that I started plying at the beginning of the yarn, and I plied on a different double-treadle scotch-tension wheel using a 9.75:1 ratio. My ply distance was about 14 inches (about 36 centimeters), so I treadled four to five times per length. I let the yarn rest on the bobbin overnight before skeining it onto my niddy-noddy.

I wet-finished the yarn by soaking it in very hot water for about 20 minutes, briefly swishing it in cold

water, and then finishing with another brief hot-water plunge. I gently squeezed out the water, laid out the skein, and rolled it in a towel to extract more water. I laid the skein on a horizontal window screen propped on a drying rack to dry. Prior to wet-finishing, I loosely tied the skein in four places while it was on the niddy-noddy. I definitely paid attention to loose tension on my ties as I knew this yarn would bloom significantly in the finishing. The dried skein is a full, soft three-ply yarn that I love to look at and touch. It measured 111.7 yards (102.1 meters) as it ran through my digital yarn counter while I wound it into a center-pull ball, and it weighed 79.3 grams. The yarn has 10 wraps per inch and demonstrates a 30-degree angle of twist. It has 2.6 twists per inch, meaning there are eight ply bumps in 1 inch divided by three (plies).

I wanted to knit a swatch in which the ombré yarn and pattern design complement each other, so I chose a simple lace pattern I found online as *Rising Lines* and in Barbara G. Walker's stitch dictionaries as *Pilsner Pleating*. I knitted the sample on size 5 (3.75 mm)



0.8 grams white,
1.2 grams dark gray

0.6 grams white,
1.4 grams dark gray

0.4 grams white,
1.6 grams dark gray

0.2 grams white,
1.8 grams dark gray

0 grams white,
2 grams dark gray

needles and worked through one entire ombré section, casting on with the French roast gray and binding off with white and the next section of dark gray (see page 66). I worked the lace pattern four times over 41 stitches. I soaked my swatch in very hot water and used pins to block it to a window screen.

I recently started drinking a cup of coffee in the morning after a long hiatus from this practice. Admittedly, a cup of dark roast coffee is a vehicle for cream for me. I put the cream in the bottom of my cup and then watch the shades change as I pour the rich brew into it. As I study my blocked sample and the skein of yarn that I created, I compare it to the pleasure I derive from that morning brew. I may name the colorway of my ombré “Ooh la la Au Lait,” as the color shifts remind me of that beautiful morning elixir. Depending on the lighting, I see the shifts moving diagonally from corner to corner in the knitted sample as the geometry of the pattern complements the yarn. I also derive deep pleasure and satisfaction in knowing that my yarn and knitted sample have the visual and

textural qualities that I desired. Patient planning and preparation produced results that give me that “ooh la la!” feeling. ●

Resources

Fox Farm Homestead, dark French roast gray Merino neck fleece from a sheep named Aretha Franklin, foxfarmhomestead.com.

Julie Robinson of DeBeau Farm, white Merino neck fleece.

Walker, Barbara G. *A Second Treasury of Knitting Patterns*. Pittsville, WI: Schoolhouse Press, 1998.

Winsper, Sarah. “Beginner’s Guide to Lace Knitting.” Gathered, March 19, 2024. gathered.how/knitting-and-crochet/knitting/lace-knitting#Rising-lines.

Sylvia Smith has been spinning for around 30 years and is currently working her way through the Master Spinner program at Olds College. She’s very active in her local guild and teaches a variety of classes at a local yarn shop. She is also an occasional contributor to *Spin Off* and *PLY* magazines. She lives in northwest Montana with her husband and cat; one is an enabler of her fiber pursuits, while the other is an occasional obstacle.



A long tonal gradient creates the illusion of light and shadow in Sylvia's lacy geometric scarf.

Au Lait Scarf

SYLVIA SMITH

There are typically two classes of spinners: those who spin yarn for a specific end project and those who spin to spin and figure out what to do with the yarn later. Like the shades of brownish gray in my ombré, I wandered into an in-between category with this project. I had an end project in mind, but my finished piece may have become something else. Creating the gently shifting shades of my ombré skein is the heart of this piece.

I knitted this scarf after seeing how well this simple lace pattern complemented my handspun ombré yarn. It's geometric with squares split into triangles by a row of eyelets. Repeated, it creates a light pleating effect that is as attractive on the wrong side as it is on the right side. I first found this stitch motif online, but Barbara G. Walker also includes two variations—one with the k2tog grain moving to the right and another to the left—in her famous *A Second Treasury of Knitting Patterns*. We've added another twist and included instructions for working flat and in the round, so you could knit the scarf shown here or easily cast on for a cowl in the round. The geometric block pattern works equally well with ombré shifts moving horizontally or vertically.



The reversible stitch motif looks great on front and back as well as right side up or upside down. Shown here with cast-on edge at the top



Right side (*left*) and wrong side (*right*)

SPINNING AND KNITTING NOTES

I spun four ombré sections from white to dark, meaning I started with white again after the dark (see page 66). I decided to change the ombré appearance in my scarf by reversing the yarn for each subsequent ombré. I wound my skein into a center-pull ball so that I could alternate between knitting from the center end and the outside end. I started knitting from the pure dark gray in the center of the ball. When I got to the end of the white section of that ombré, I attached the white end of the yarn from the outside of the ball and continued to knit from light back to dark. At that point, I reattached the dark end of the yarn from the center of the ball. The colors of the finished scarf progress from dark to light and back to dark a couple of times, with the cast-on and bound-off edges both dark.

Resources

Walker, Barbara G. *A Second Treasury of Knitting Patterns*. Pittsville, WI: Schoolhouse Press, 1998.

MATERIALS

Fiber Merino wool, gradated natural colors, 3 oz (85 g).

Yarn 3-ply (chain-plied) worsted weight (635 ypp; 10 wpi), 112 yd.

Needles Size 5 (3.75 mm). Adjust needle size if necessary to obtain the correct gauge.

Notions Tapestry needle.

Gauge 17 sts and 27 rows = 4" in Pleats and Ladders patt.

Finished Size 9¾" wide × 31" long.

Visit spinoffmagazine.com/spin-off-abbreviations for terms you don't know.

STITCH GUIDE

Pleats and Ladders (flat) (multiple of 8 sts + 1):

Row 1 (RS) *K6, k2tog, yo; rep from * to last st, k1.

Row 2 (WS) P1, *k1, p7; rep from * to end.

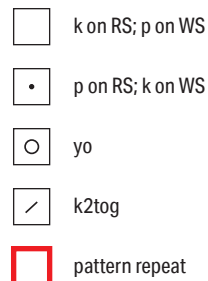
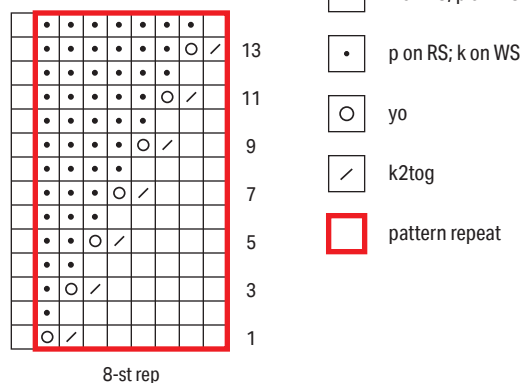
Row 3 *K5, k2tog, yo, p1; rep from * to last st, k1.

Row 4 P1, *k2, p6; rep from * to end.

Row 5 *K4, k2tog, yo, p2; rep from * to last st, k1.

Row 6 P1, *k3, p5; rep from * to end.

Pleats and Ladders



Row 7 *K3, k2tog, yo, p3; rep from * to last st, k1.

Row 8 P1, *k4, p4; rep from * to end.

Row 9 *K2, k2tog, yo, p4; rep from * to last st, k1.

Row 10 P1, *k5, p3; rep from * to end.

Row 11 *K1, k2tog, yo, p5; rep from * to last st, k1.

Row 12 P1, *k6, p2; rep from * to end.

Row 13 *K2tog, yo, p6; rep from * to last st, k1.

Row 14 P1, *k7, p1; rep from * to end.

Rep Rows 1–14 for patt.

Pleats and Ladders (in the round) (multiple of 8 sts):

Rnd 1 *K6, k2tog, yo; rep from * to end.

Rnd 2 *K7, p1; rep from * to end.

Rnd 3 *K5, k2tog, yo, p1; rep from * to end.

Rnd 4 *K6, p2; rep from * to end.

Rnd 5 *K4, k2tog, yo, p2; rep from * to end.

Rnd 6 *K5, p3; rep from * to end.

Rnd 7 *K3, k2tog, yo, p3; rep from * to end.

Rnd 8 *K4, p4; rep from * to end.

Rnd 9 *K2, k2tog, yo, p4; rep from * to end.

Rnd 10 *K3, p5; rep from * to end.

Rnd 11 *K1, k2tog, yo, p5; rep from * to end.

Rnd 12 *K2, p6; rep from * to end.

Rnd 13 *K2tog, yo, p6; rep from * to end.

Rnd 14 *K1, p7; rep from * to end.

Rep Rnds 1–14 for patt.

SCARF

CO 41 sts.

Work Rows 1–14 of Pleats and Ladders (flat) patt 15 times.

BO all sts.

FINISHING

Weave in ends. Block to measurements. ●

Sylvia Smith has been spinning for around 30 years and is currently working her way through the Master Spinner program at Olds College. She's very active in her local guild and teaches a variety of classes at a local yarn shop. She is also an occasional contributor to *Spin Off* and *PLY* magazines. She lives in northwest Montana with her husband and cat; one is an enabler of her fiber pursuits, while the other is an occasional obstacle.

Cowl Variation

The Pleats and Ladders stitch motif is ideal for scarves and cowls since it looks great on front and back, doesn't roll, and offers beautiful texture. We've included the instructions for the stitch pattern worked in the round here (see Stitch Guide), or you can follow the Pleats and Ladders chart by working only the pattern repeat in the red box.

As a bonus for current subscribers, we've included the instructions for a handspun cowl version of the Au Lait Scarf on our website at [LT.Media/Pleat-Cowl](https://www.ltmmedia.com/Pleat-Cowl).



Try a vibrant gradient for knitting in the round.





Photos by Gale Zucker

Woolgrowers Hat & Cowl

SARAH POPE

Have you heard about Farm & Fiber Knits? Long Thread Media's newest community brings knitters closer to the roots (and hooves) of the fiber life. With a growing library of knitting patterns and weekly articles ranging from yarn reviews to farm visits to knitting techniques, this online—and soon-to-be print—resource connects readers with natural fibers from “field to finished project.”

| Learn more at farmfiberknits.com.

To celebrate the launch of Farm & Fiber Knits, we wanted to share a great pattern from the FFK library and introduce you to the project designer, Sarah Pope. Sarah is the spinner, knitter, and shepherd behind San Juan Woolworks. She lives in Washington with her family and flock of North Country Cheviots.

Sarah creates millspun yarns for San Juan Woolworks using much of the wool from her flock, but she also loves spinning her bouncy fleeces. We asked her for a few tips for creating a handspun Woolgrowers Hat & Cowl. Find them on our website at LT.Media/Woolgrowers.

The Woolgrowers Hat & Cowl are designed as sampler projects for unique skeins of small-batch yarn you may find at fiber festivals or farmers' markets. Use any DK or light-worsted-weight wool. The stitch pattern, adapted from a historical Danish motif, uses purl and twisted stitches to create a lively geometric surface design.

MATERIALS

Cowl

Yarn 200 yd (183 m) DK-weight wool yarn. Gray cowl: San Juan Woolworks *Grey Haven* (North Country Cheviot cross wool; 240 yd [201 m]/3½ oz [100 g]), 1 skein. Beige cowl: Shepherd's Hey Farm 3-ply DK (Corriedale/Romeldale/Romney wool; 225 yd [206 m]/3.7 oz [105 g]) in Faded Moorit.

Needles Size 5 (3.75 mm) 16" (40 cm) circular. Adjust needle size if necessary to obtain the correct gauge.

Notions Stitch markers (m); tapestry needle.

Gauge 20 sts and 32 rnds = about 4" (10 cm) in pattern, blocked.

Finished Size 22½" (56 cm) circumference and 8½" (21.5 cm) tall after light blocking.

Hat

Yarn 150 yd (137 m) DK-weight wool yarn. Shown here: McFarland Creek Lamb Ranch *Romney x Cormo DK* (260 yd [238 m]/3½ oz [100 g]) in Onion Skin, 1 skein.

Needles Size 5 (3.75 mm) 16" (40 cm) circular and set of double-pointed needles. Adjust needle size if necessary to obtain the correct gauge.

Notions Stitch markers; tapestry needle.

Gauge 20 sts and 32 rnds = 4" (10 cm) in pattern, blocked.

Finished Size 19½" (49.5 cm) circumference and 8½" (21.5 cm) tall after light blocking.

| Visit spinoffmagazine.com/spin-off-abbreviations for terms you don't know.

NOTES

- The cowl and hat body are worked from a chart. Hat crown decreases are both charted and written; work from either set of directions.
- The construction and breed content of your yarn, as well as the needle size that yields the correct gauge, will determine whether the effect is softly rustic or crisply elegant.

COWL

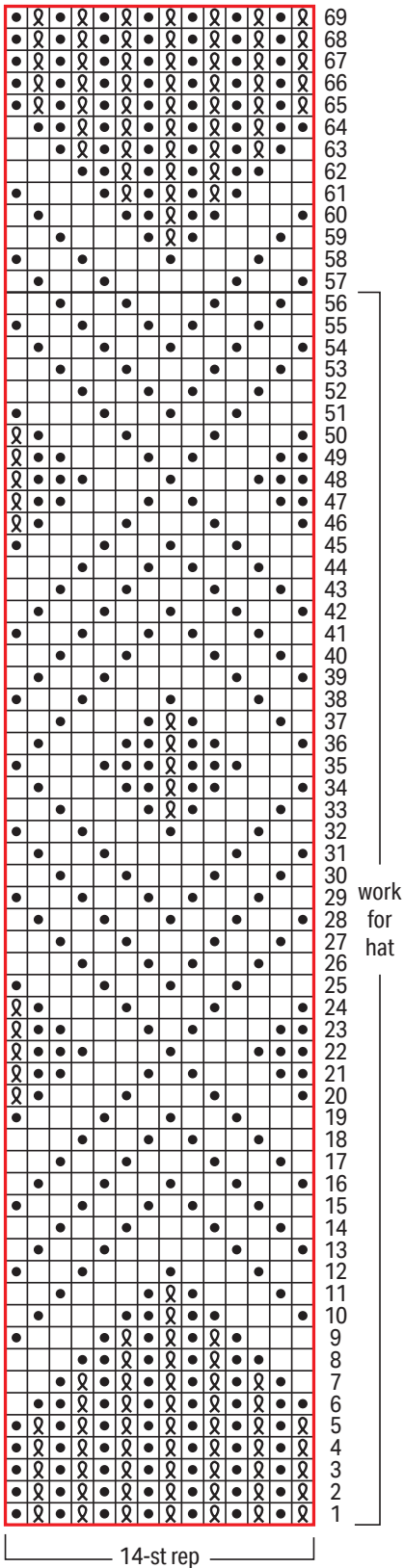
CO 112 sts with long-tail cast-on or your favorite stretchy method. Place marker (pm) for beginning of round and join to work in the round .

Work Rnds 1–69 of Cowl and Hat Chart.

Bind off.



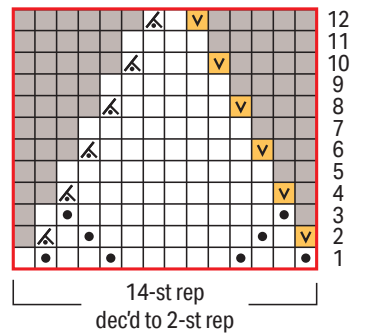
Cowl and Hat



Key

- knit
- purl
- k1tbl
- no stitch
- repeat
- remove BOR m,
sl 1 pwise, replace BOR m
(not included in stitch count)
- p3tog last 2 sts of rnd
tog with sl st from beg of rnd

Crown Chart



Finishing

Weave in ends. Block to measurement.

HAT

Using circular needle, CO 98 sts with long-tail cast-on or your favorite stretchy method. Place marker (pm) for beginning of round and join to work in the round.

Work Rnds 1–56 of Cowl and Hat Chart.

Work Rnds 1–12 of Crown Chart, or use written instructions below.

Crown

Rnd 1 *P1, k2, p1, k5, p1, k2, p1, k1; rep from * to end of rnd.

Rnd 2 Remove m, sl 1 pwise, replace m, *k1, p1, k7, p1, k1, p3tog (last 2 sts of rnd tog with sl st from beg of rnd); rep from * to end of rnd—84 sts rem.

Rnd 3 *P1, k9, p1, k1; rep from * to end of rnd.

Rnd 4 Remove m, sl 1 pwise, replace m, *k9, p3tog; rep from * to end of rnd—70 sts rem.

Rnds 5, 7, 9, and 11 Knit.

Rnd 6 Remove m, sl 1 pwise, replace m, *k7, p3tog; rep from * to end of rnd—56 sts rem.

Rnd 8 Remove m, sl 1 pwise, replace m, *k5, p3tog; rep from * to end of rnd—42 sts rem.

Rnd 10 Remove m, sl 1 pwise, replace m, *k3, p3tog; rep from * to end of rnd—28 sts rem.

Rnd 12 Remove m, sl 1 pwise, replace m, *k1, p3tog; rep from * to end of rnd—14 sts rem.

Break yarn, thread tail on a tapestry needle, and draw through remaining sts to cinch closed.

Finishing

Weave in ends. Block lightly. ●

Sarah Pope designs knitwear and runs a tiny wool company from her family's sheep farm on San Juan Island, Washington. She is also the market manager for an inter-island food hub and sings soprano in three community choirs.



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blazingstarranch.com

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lambspun.com

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www.pineycreekyarn.com

Serendipity Yarn & Gifts

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serendipityyarn.com

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madwool.com

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yarnunderground.com

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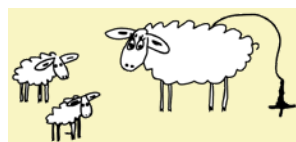
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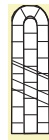
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Visit spinoffmagazine.com or follow the direct links below to some of our
newest content for *Spin Off* Summer 2024.

Meet Clarion Call Fiber Arts

Clarion Overmoyer's handspun is featured on the Summer cover, so we asked her a few questions to learn more about her process and work.

LT.Media/Clarion

The Au Lait Scarf Goes Circular

Katrina King shares her project instructions for spinning and knitting the Pleats and Ladders motif featured in the Au Lait Scarf (see page 70) as a colorful gradient cowl. Current subscribers can access the full pattern instructions for a cowl version.

LT.Media/Pleat-Cowl

A Shepherd's Take on the Woolgrowers Hat & Cowl

Sarah Pope designed this sweet hat and cowl (see page 74) for Farm & Fiber Knits, and she has some great tips for spinning your own.

LT.Media/Woolgrowers

Oldest Knitting in the New World

Learn more about Magdalena de Cao Viejo, the Peruvian community that lived there, and the knitted artifacts they left behind (see page 26). Current subscribers can find Dr. Carrie Brezine's article and original pattern, first published in *PieceWork*, now in the *Spin Off* library.

LT.Media/Magdalena

4 Ways to Spin Tweeds

Add a splash of color and texture to your summer spins with tweeds!

LT.Media/Summer-Tweeds



A Merino and sari silk blend from Living Dreams Yarn makes a great tweed.

Photo by Kate Larson