

PALE MORNING DUN



By Bob Bates

Often you will find fly patterns that will imitate different mayflies closely enough to catch fish in a variety of situations. This is one of them. In the western U.S. we have the Pale Morning Dun that some people consider the most important mayfly around. In the eastern part of the U.S. there is a mayfly called the Sulphur. Then there is the Eastern Pale Evening Dun that also has a yellowish body and legs. If you want more details on these mayflies get a good book on mayflies and start studying the chapter(s) on the Genus *Ephemerella*.

Depending upon where you are PMDs might be hatching from May to September. The nymphs are classified as crawlers and live in the medium to slow water streams. In spite of its PMD name they hatch from mid morning to mid afternoon (sometimes as late as 6PM). According to some descriptions the dun actually breaks out of the nymphal shell before it breaks through surface film. Everything gets pretty wet, and the wet wings have to dry before the dun can fly off. So it sits on the water surface for quite a while. This is a dangerous time for the mayfly, but a good time for fish and anglers. You will find that cool and misty days generally provide longer lasting hatches than hot dry days.

Jim Johnson, Big Fork, MT tied this pattern at the 2007 FFF Fly Fishing Show and Conclave in Livingston, MT. Jim has tied at a lot of shows. At one of the shows a guy from Pennsylvania said: "Hay! That's going to be a perfect Sulfur" as Jim tied this PMD.

Materials list:

Hook: DaiRiki 300, sizes 12-18

Thread: Danville, Flymaster, yellow

Tail: Coq DeLon

Wings: Wood duck

Body: Superfine dubbing, PMD yellow

Hackle: Ginger or tan

Tying steps:



1. Attach thread and build a thread base leaving the thread at mid-shank.



2. Coq DeLeon feather, stiff fibers toward the tip make good tails.



3. Pull off the fluff and any short fibers. Select a few fibers that are all the same length. Tie them on to make a tail that is 1-1/2 shank lengths long. This is much longer than the books say, but it will all work out. Then move the thread forward to a point about one eye width back from the eye.



4. Pick a wood duck feather that is flat across the top. Pull off the fluff and short fibers. Squeeze the fibers into a brush and tie them on with the tips forward where the thread is hanging. Make wings about a shank length long. Cut off the butts at about mid shank, and wind thread rearward to cover the butts. Leave thread hanging at the bend. Note: with the longer than “standard” tail and wings mounted forward of the usual 1/3rd point, the fly will never tip over on its nose.



5. Put dubbing on thread using your favorite method. When rolling dubbing between thumb and first finger, always roll it in one direction. Wrap dubbed thread forward toward the wing. Taper the body larger to the front, and stop wrapping a little short of the wing. This is to leave room for wrapping the hackle.



6. Pull up wing and put just a few winds of thread in front. Don't put on a lot of thread winds to stand up the wing like many tiers do. Leave thread behind the wing. Pull off fuzz and long fibers from the hackle feather tie it down behind the wing. (This picture was taken before Jim did the next part of the step.) Fold the stem back and tie it in so it helps hold the wing a little straighter. This saves about 5 turns of thread.



7. Put three hackle wraps in back of the wing and three in front so the wing in the middle of the hackle. Secure and trim excess feather. Put Super Glue on an inch or so of your thread and wind the head. Let the bobbin hang a little while until it dries. Want water proof Super Glue. According to Jim most of the Loctite Super Glues are water proof. Pull the wings apart to give the traditional appearance of a mayfly. Use black felt pen to darken the head; then you can put a little head cement over the threads.

Closing comments: This is a high floating PMD that will catch a lot of fish. The PMDs where Jim lives are fairly large so he can tie on size 14 hooks. Some PMDs are as small as size 18 hooks. Match the size of mayflies floating on the surface. Also look at the body color carefully as some PMDs have a slightly pinkish or reddish tinge. I might be wrong, but I don't think that you need follow what Earnest Schwiebert once specified: "pinkish urine-burned red fox belly fur" There are other ways to achieve the pinkish cast. (Red or pink thread or mix in some reddish dubbing.)

Please Credit FFF Website or FFF Clubwire with any use of the pattern.
You can direct any questions or comments to FOM at flyofthemonth@fedflyfishers.org