

FFF Fly of the Month

WOLFY'S HOPPER



By Bob Bates

July through September are months when we should be looking for opportunities to use a grasshopper pattern. (At least in the U.S. and Canada.) Warm days with a strong wind blowing them into the water are best. When the hoppers are active watch to see where they are flying and falling into the water. Sometimes they hop from one place to another and miss the landing. This is why many casters work the shoreline, especially if there are overhanging grasses, etc. However, don't neglect areas away from the bank. Sometimes a hopper will attempt to fly across a larger stream only to run out of energy part way and drop.

One nice feature about hopper fishing is that you don't have to make a delicate cast. Let the fly hit with a splat. The hard landing attracts the attention of fish that are looking for a big meal. What happens after the landing is sometimes hard to imitate. Several years ago I watched grasshoppers crash in Montana's Missouri River. There were three post splat actions: One drifting downstream quietly, another struggling as it drifted and the third was a regular frog-kick toward shore. I don't know about you, but I can do a reasonable job imitating only the first.

In 1992 Eric Schubert then President of the North Idaho Flycasters was tying flies at the Club sponsored Flyfishing Exposition at the Silver Lake Mall in Coeur d'Alene, ID. His Wolfy's Hopper was different enough to put in my fly box and tell others about. Eric said this about the fly's history: "I originally developed it for fishing large brown trout on the Green River in Pinedale,

Wyoming. As with most hopper patterns that I was using at the time, I found that they did not float sufficiently in the fast moving water of the Green River. The Wolfy's Hopper solved my problem---and the brown trout love it." This was about 1987.

When "hopper" fishing Eric works stream banks carefully. For the reasons above. He fishes a lot on "The River" (Coeur d'Alene ?, St. Joe ?) where he wades and casts to the bank. But he also fishes some small streams. One of his tricks is to stand on one bank, cast across to the other bank and then hop his fly into the water. Fish think it is real and slam it. He started this technique on the Green River. Eric uses his fly for more than a grasshopper pattern; it also serves him as a stonefly imitation on the Clark Fork River, Montana.

Materials List:

Hook: Mustad 9672, Tiemco TMC 200R, etc. 8-10

Thread: Olive, Gudebrod 6/0

Body: Deer hair, dyed green, yellowish olive or yellow

Rib: Tying thread

Underwing: Olive marabou

Wing: Turkey wing quill

Bullet head and collar: Dyed deer hair: orange, olive, mottled yellow, brown

Tying Steps:

1. Smash barb if you wish, and wrap a thread base around the bend a little.
2. Select a pencil size bundle of deer hair, remove fuzz and tie it on at bend with butts pointing rearward. Let hair surround the hook. Pull deer hair forward tightly and spiral thread forward over the body for about 3/4ths shank length. Trim excess hair.
3. Select two or three dozen marabou fibers. Trim them to shank length and attach so they lay on top of body. Tips of marabou extend beyond the hook a little.
4. Pick a segment of turkey wing quill about 3/16- to 1/4-inch wide and round one end with your scissors. Tie wing so it is a little shorter than the marabou. Lacquered (Grumbacher spray or head cement) the wing to strengthen it. (I treat the turkey quill and let it dry before starting to tie.)
5. Take another pencil size bunch of deer hair, stack it and cut it to about

shank length. (Eric has tied so many of them that he doesn't measure; he just stacks, trims and ties.) Tie hair just behind the eye with tips facing forward. Take two wraps around the bundle. Tighten thread, and when hair starts to flare, give your tying thread a solid pull making the hair spin and flare completely. A few more tight thread warps and move thread backward to front of body. (Spinning deer hair with 6/0 Gudebrod works, but I had to use 3/0 with some other brands.)

6. Bring all the deer hair back, hold it along body and tightly wrap with thread. This makes a neat bullet head and a flared deer hair collar. Finish fly with a whip finish behind the head. (Eric uses three half hitches.) Put head cement on whip finish or half hitches and work some into the head to make it more durable.

"Hopper Time" is here. Pick colors to match hoppers in your area, and make a few easy to tie Wolfy's Hoppers. Your next assignment: Go out and catch fish.

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You can direct any questions or comments to flyofthemonth@fedflyfishers.org