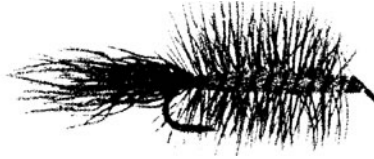


Federation of Fly Fishers Fly of the Month

The lowly Woolly Buzzer

October 1998



Comments by Jim Abbs

For many beginning fly tiers, their first pattern in their first fly tying class was the ubiquitous Woolly Buzzer. This relatively new fly became popular in the late 1970's through the innovation of Russell Blessing of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania and the promotion of Barry Beck. While it has it may have its origins in the very old (British) pattern the Woolly Worm, it is now an American standby. As Eric Leiser declared, the Woolly Buzzer is one of the most important patterns to be added to our fly boxes in the last generation. The reason is versatility.

Woolly Buzzers catch trout, bass, salmon---in both Atlantic and Pacific rivers, steelhead, Arctic char, northern pike, bluegills and even carp. It would not be an exaggeration to say that there is hardly a fish that swims that could not be caught with a Woolly Buzzer. This wide-ranging success is due to the fact that these flies can be used to imitate a variety of fish food forms, including baitfish, crustaceans, insect nymphs salamanders and leeches. To achieve this chameleon status, Woolly Buzzers are tied in green, red, olive, gray, grizzly, brown, black, yellow, white, and purple and in all combinations of these colors. This fly can be fished near the surface, or with the addition of weight it is often fished deep.

For fly tiers, the basic Woolly Buzzer is simple and easy to tie, and by incorporating new sparkling materials, like Krystal Flash and Flashabou, it continues to produce. Obviously the Woolly Buzzer may not be a glamorous fly, but it deserves to be in everyone's fly box for all kinds of fly fishing, from warmwater to saltwater.

Interestingly, most English fly tying books do not acknowledge the woolly buzzer by name, but instead the Woolly Worm. However if you look at the English Woolly Worm, it has a long tail like the American Woolly Buzzer.

Fishing the Woolly Buzzer is a matter of patience and confidence. Because of the soft saddle hackle rib and the marabou tail, it does not require much action on the part of the angler to give this fly a pulsating, undulating look. In a stream or river, slow to very slow is the key because the current will make it look alive. In a lake, a little more action may be required, but not too much and not too fast.

MATERIALS

HOOK: Mustad 79580 or 9672 (sizes 4-16)

THREAD: Color chosen to match fly

BODY: Chenille (Black and olive are popular, but many colors are used)

TAIL: Marabou feathers (about as long as shank of hook); some tiers add Flashabou or Krystal flash to tail

RIB: Saddle feathers tied palmer style (tied spiral style the entire length of the hook shank)

TYING STEPS

1. Wind thread around hook shank; cover lead wire if weight is used. Wind thread back on shank near barb of the hook.
2. Tie in a clump of marabou feathers large enough to present a visible tail when wet.
3. Tie in saddle hackle with the convex side toward the hook.
4. Tie in a six inch length of chenille and wind thread forward to a point 1/8 inch behind the hook eye.
5. Wind chenille forward forming a long slender body. Tie off chenille and trim.
6. Wind hackle feather forward in an even spaced spiral wrap. Tie off feather behind hook eye and trim.
7. Form head with thread, whip finish, trim and apply head cement.

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