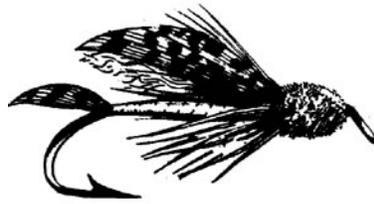


Federation of Fly Fishers Fly of the Month

Gapen's Muddler Minnow

July, 1998



Comments by Jim Abbs

When it comes to an all-around fly there perhaps is none more popular or famous than Don Gapen's Muddler Minnow. This fly is commonly used as a minnow, a grasshopper, a cricket, an emerging green drake, a stonefly, a tadpole and even a spent mayfly. Spin anglers have tied a version of the Muddler Minnow on jig heads to use for bass and walleye. The Muddler Minnow is so respected and well-known that there are fly shops and even fly fishing clubs named after it.

Don Gapen of Anoka, Minnesota originated this fly in the late 1930s to imitate the sculpin, a bottom feeder-dweller that has no swim bladder and is more like a lizard than a fish. Gapen developed this fly for the big Nipigon Brook Trout in Ontario, using a head of spun deer hair.

This fly was popularized by Dan Bailey, a New Yorker transplanted to Montana, with several variations, particularly the Marabou Muddler, which Bailey described as the top producer for big Montana trout. The muddler minnow has been used for virtually all species of warmwater, coldwater and saltwater fish and also has served as a basis for many other patterns, like the Spuddler, Muddler Hopper, Missoulian Spook, Searcy Muddler, Keel Muddler, to name just the more famous variations.

The pattern described here is the classic one. Color variations can be accomplished by changing the color of the underwing, body or even the wing. A very popular and deadly variation is the marabou muddler, which basically involves substituting marabou (yellow and white are most popular) for both the wing and underwing, with a few strands of peacock herl.

MATERIALS:

Hook: Mustad 9672, # 2-10

Thread: Brown

Tail: Mottled brown turkey quill section

Body: Flat gold tinsel

Underwing: Gray squirrel tail fibers, fairly sparse

Wing: Two mottled turkey wing quill sections, tied slightly off to the side of the body and angling upward toward the bend of the hook

Head: Spun and clipped deer hair, with some of the fibers angling backwards to form a collar

TYING STEPS:

Attach thread at the rear of the hook and tie tail on top (7-8 fibers for a size 6 hook). Wind thread about 2/3 of the way back toward the hook eye.

Tie in length of flat gold tinsel. Wrap the tinsel toward the tail in close, even wraps back to the tail and then wrap it forward over first layer to original tie in point.

Take a small clump of squirrel hair fibers with the tips extending to the center of the tail (about the bend of the hook)

Select a right and left section of a mottled turkey wing quill and place their concave sides together. Tie these sections of turkey wing quill directly on top of the squirrel hair underwing. Wind the thread back toward the eye.

Tie in a small clump of deer body hair (a little bigger than a wood matchstick), with the tips pointed toward the rear of the hook and the cut ends point forward. 'Spin the deer hair' by bringing the thread around the deer hair and hook shank and pulling it toward you. The deer hair will flare. Add more deer hair on other side of hook and continue with small clumps until the front 1/3 of the hook shank is covered with flared deer hair.

Remove the fly from the tying vise and trim the flared deer hair to form a shape with a rounded top and a flat bottom. Different tiers prefer different shapes.

Whip finish and 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