

FFF Fly of the Month

GRAY DRAKE DUN



By Bob Bates

Spring is when we expect to see some larger mayflies. Gray Drakes satisfy the definition of "larger mayflies." They are big (17 to 10 mm), hook sizes 8 to 12, and prompt heavy feeding on the part of trout. According to the latest information posted on the Purdue University website there are 20 species of the Genus Siphonurus (pronounced -- sif lun or uss) in North America. Most of these have the common name Gray Drake, and they look enough alike that one pattern will do the job. Their normal habitat is lakes and slow- to medium-flowing streams where there is vegetation and silt to provide the nymphs protection. Best May to October hatches are in the Midwest and Western sections of Canada and the United States.

Julie Nielsen tied this Gray Drake Dun at the 2002 FFF Show and Conclave in Livingston, MT. It has good floatation with an elk hair body and plenty of hackle for the parachute. Some places to try a dead drift float with it are the Crowsnest and Bow Rivers in Canada and Yellowstone River in Yellowstone Park and The Henry's Fork in the U.S. Putting a nymph dropper under it gives the fish a second option.

Hatching time, from morning to after dark, is dependent on water temperature so check with a local fly shop for details.

Materials

Hook: TMC 100 or equivalent dry fly hook, sizes 8-12

Thread: Gray 6/0, Griffiths preferred

Tail: Pheasant tail, etc. preferred dyed gray

Body: Elk hair

Post: White, deer belly hair

Hackle: Dun

Thorax: Gray, dubbed, Hairline Superfine preferred

Tying Steps

1. If you prefer barbless hooks smash the barb before you start tying.
2. Attach thread to hook at a point $\frac{1}{3}$ rd shank length back from eye, and lay a $\frac{2}{3}$ rd shank length thread base rearward to the bend. Hold 5 or 6 pheasant tail fibers to make a shank length tail, trim at $\frac{1}{3}$ rd point, secure at bend and wind thread forward to $\frac{1}{3}$ rd point.
3. Cut off a quantity of elk hair less than the diameter of a wooden kitchen match, clean out under fur and stack. After cleaning the bundle should be $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{2}{3}$ rd the diameter of a wooden match. Position hair so tips are a little past the bend, hold them in place and trim butts at the $\frac{1}{3}$ rd point. Wiggle hair down to surround hook. Wind thread around hook to catch $\frac{1}{16}$ -inch of the elk hair securely. Then spiral thread rearward three turns to bend. The body can be tapered a little by varying the thread tension. Make two tight thread wraps at bend, and spiral thread forward to $\frac{1}{3}$ rd point. The tips of the elk hair will flare a little.
4. Cut off a quantity of deer belly hair about the size of a wooden kitchen match, clean out under fur and stack. Measure for a shank length post and trim. Secure deer hair to hook in front of body with tips to the rear. Wind thread rearward forcing deer hair against the square cut end of the body. This starts to stand up the post.
5. Stand up the post and wind thread around the post to strengthen it. Wind up to where top of hackle will be and then back down again.
6. Select a saddle hackle with barbs that are a shank length long. Flare the hackle by holding the tip and stroking the barbs toward the butt. Trim the barbs a little, but trim the side toward the post a little farther than the other side. (This is easier to see if there is light background.) Secure the hackle to the hook in front of the post with the stem touching the post and the main part of the hackle to the rear.
7. Dub the thorax between the post and the eye of the hook. Finish with the thread next to the post.

8. Pull hackle upward and start wrapping hackle with each wrap under the preceding one. Julie suggested 4 to 5 wraps for most water and 7 to 8 wraps for fast water. Reach under hook, keep tension on the hackle and wrap thread over it. Whip finish. Trim excess hackle as close to the post as possible.

The body on this pattern is a little difficult to tie, but it is worth it. The elk hair body gives a little extra floatation. Like other parachute patterns the white post is usually easy to see so you can keep track of the fly and see it vanish when a fish strikes. If a lot of foam interferes with visibility, Julie might not object if you substitute a brighter color deer hair post.

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