

## **FLYING ANT**



**By Bob Bates**

Gary Barnes, Rigby, ID has been tying this pattern, and using it successfully, for over two years. The fish on the Henry's Fork of the Snake R. love it. This includes fish on Harriman Ranch, and any fly that can catch fish on the Ranch has to be good. It also works on the South Fork of the Snake R., in lakes and all over Montana. He showed us how to tie it at the FFF 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Conclave in Livingston, MT, August 2005. Among other things, Gary ties custom flies. The pictures were taken as he demonstrated tying the fly at the Conclave.

There are times when fish are clearly rising to surface insects, but you can't tell what is happening. First look carefully at the water surface and you might see spent wing ants floating in the surface film. Or you might as I did wait for another clue. I was fishing a lake when fish started rising all over. I couldn't figure out what was going on until I heard a "clunk" on the side of my aluminum boat. There was a black carpenter ant trying to crawl up the side. I put on a black fly of the right size and immediately started catching fish. I always have had wet ant patterns in my fly box, but since then I also have some floating patterns.

It is estimated that there are over 3,000 species of ants. However, imitating all of them is not necessary. Sizes range from the 8 or 10 carpenter ants to miniscule size 24s. Find out what ants are like in your area. Late summer and fall when the ants are flying around is a great time to search for ant eating fish. Try ant patterns in streams even if fish are not

rising. Most ants are black but there are cinnamon, reddish and red abdomen colored species. It is not too surprising that fish will key on hapless flying ants that fall helplessly into the water. Also according to some they have tart or spicy taste. (Not from my research.) More information on ants can be found in Jim Abbs' article in the old FFF Fly of the Month Website.

### **Materials List:**

**Hook:** Mustad 3906, sizes 14-18

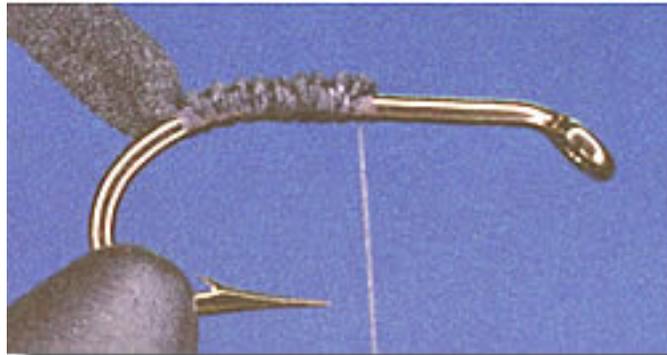
**Thread:** Uni, Iron gray, 8/0

**Body:** Foam, black, 1mm, razor thin, by 1/8-inch wide

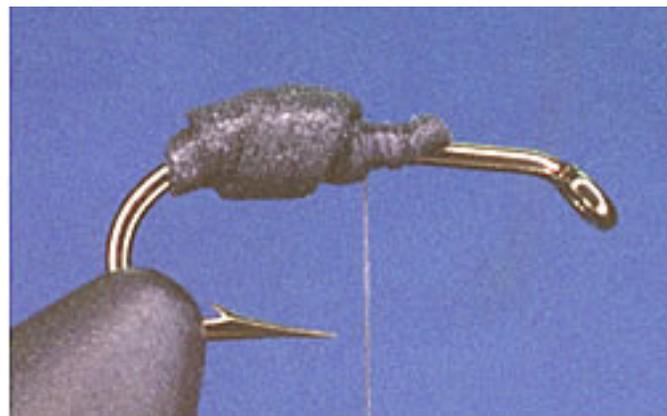
**Wing:** Hi viz white or tan, can use Antron or Z-lon

**Hackle:** Whiting saddle, black

### **Tying Steps:**



1. Put thread on about mid-shank, wind to rear, tie on foam a little around the bend and move thread forward to mid-shank. Trim any excess foam



2. Pull on foam a little to make a smooth body. Pulling also decreases width. Wrap foam forward to about point of hook, then rearward to bend (above barb) and wrap forward to mid-shank. Secure foam, trim excess, wind thread rearward to a little behind mid-shank and then wind thread forward to about mid-shank.



3. Set wing in place so fibers extend to the back of the hook. Hold in V with about half of the fibers on each side of the hook. Wind thread rearward to lock in the V shape.



4. Select a black hackle with barbs that are about a gap width long. Pull off or cut some of the barbs so there is some bare shank. Secure to hook with dull side forward just in front of wings. If the feather is not just in front of wings wind thread rearward to make sure it is. Trim and wind thread forward over stem.



5. Wrap hackle three times around shank, secure and trim excess.



6. Secure foam in front of hackle, wind thread forward over foam, trim excess and wind thread forward to within one eye width of hook's eye.



7. Wrap foam three times around shank, secure and trim excess.



8. Whip finish over front of foam and trim thread.

**Closing comments:** Just holding this fly in your hand you know that it has to catch fish. I'll tie a bunch of them to keep in the fly box for when the need arises.

Please Credit FFF Website or FFF Clubwire with any use of the pattern.  
You can direct any questions or comments to [flyofthemonth@fedflyfishers.org](mailto:flyofthemonth@fedflyfishers.org)