

DUCK LAKE CHIRONOMID, RED



By Bob Bates

Our lakes and many streams are filled with chironomids (midges). They are in the water all year and hatch anytime there is open water. They belong to the order Diptera meaning two winged. Other members of this true flies order include crane flies and mosquitoes. Adult chironomids are sometimes confused with mosquitoes because of their size and shape. However, they have one important difference: Without a sharp proboscis they can't bite.

Chironomids have a complete metamorphosis cycle (egg, larva, pupa and adult) fish have many opportunities to feed on them. Over the years midges have been ignored or relegated to the "Lesser Trout Foods" chapter of a book while a great amount of time and verbiage was expended on mayflies. Don't get me wrong, I like mayflies, especially when trout are devouring little sailboats sitting on the surface, but we need to keep our eyes open for the "Lesser Trout Foods" that the fish seem to enjoy.

Philip Rowley in his book *Fly Patterns for Stillwaters* has some eye opening charts. He studied trout diets in British Columbia lakes, Canada, and he found that chironomid larva and pupa were a large part of the fish's diet. In the spring, trout diets consisted 50 percent of chironomids. For the whole year 39 percent of the diet was chironomid larva and pupa.

OK, what about these Red Chironomids? Chironomid larva feed on the detritus at the bottom of our lakes and streams. To compensate for this oxygen deficient environment the larva have extra hemoglobin producing the red color. Anglers, especially fly tiers, see these red worms in the anchor mess and immediately start tying flies. Patterns range in size from 10 or 12 Bionic Worms to 22 chironomids tied on a red hook. Materials used to make the red body include V-Rib, floss, Body Glass, Flashabou and red wire. I have enough different patterns to write a dozen or more Fly of the Month articles on red chironomids. All the patterns catch fish, but for now I'll settle on just this one.

Jerry Smalley, Columbia Falls, Montana demonstrated this pattern at the 2006 FFF Conclave and Show in Bozeman, MT. He said that it was developed by Bob Arends on the Blackfeet Reservation. The way they use it is with a floating line and a long leader, up to 20 feet if necessary. Put a split-shot a foot above the fly. Most important: Anchor your boat at both ends, and don't retrieve the fly. It has been successful at hooking some monstrous rainbows. How does 15 to 20 fish a day sound?

Materials list:

Hook: Dai Riki 135, sizes 12 - 16

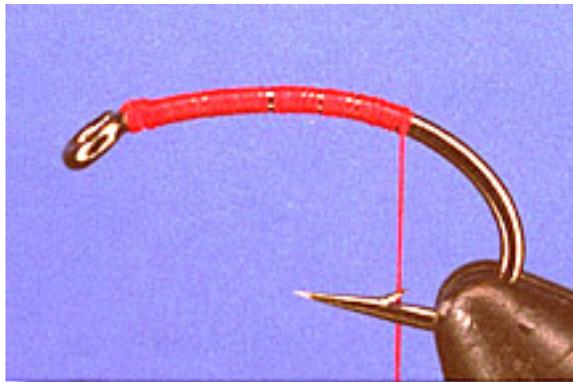
Thread: Fire Orange 8/0

Body: Micro-tubing

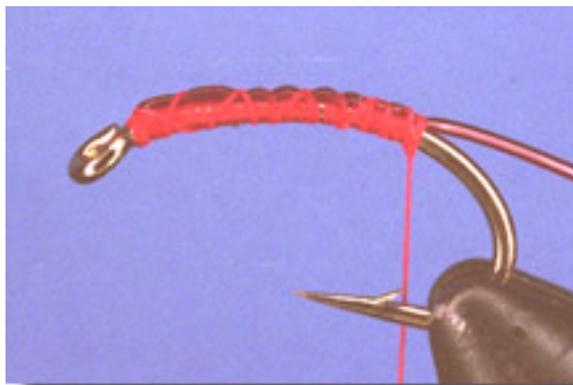
Wings: Pheasant tail fibers, natural

Head: Ice Dub UV Red

Tying Steps:



1. Lay a thread base from front to rear ending over barb.



2. Move thread to the front, lay a piece of Micro Tubing on the hook and spiral thread over it rearward to a position above the barb.



3. Wind thread forward to about two eye widths from the eye, wrap micro tubing forward to thread and secure.



4. Trim excess Micro Tubing. On each side attach three pheasant tail fibers with tips to rear, trim excess pheasant tail fibers. Put Ice Dub on thread and wrap a small head. Whip finish or double half hitch behind the eye, and trim excess thread.

Closing comments: It doesn't look like much, and it is easy to tie. So tie up a bunch and you'll be ready to do battle with some nice fish. Remember chironomid larva are in the water all the time, and it is just a matter of hanging the fly where the fish usually see them.

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