

TIED DOWN CADDIS



By Bob Bates

In North America there are 1,200 species of caddisflies (7,000 species worldwide), and they hatch from April to October. At particular times and places there are fantastic caddis hatches that attract anglers from all over. You might need a special pattern for a hatch like that, but it is a good idea to have patterns that might work any time. One of those is what Jim Ferguson, Salem, Oregon, was tying at the 2009 Federation of Fly Fishers Conclave in Loveland, Colorado. Many anglers have known about the Tied Down Caddis for years, but there are few references, books or internet, that list it. None list an originator except to say that it probably came from Oregon.

It is an emerger that can be used in streams or lakes. Hatching caddisflies sometimes just sit on the water surface, but frequently they move in a variety of ways: wiggle, swim in circles or swim in a straight line until they take off or disappear in a splash. I never figured out how to imitate circling caddisflies. Egg laying females might lay their eggs high over the water surface, dip onto the water surface to wash off eggs or lay spent on the surface after depositing their eggs on underwater plant stems.

So how do you fish a caddis pattern? Standard answer: "It depends." Jim likes to fish it the on the surface or just under the surface film of the Deschutes River, Oregon. Sometimes he will cast upstream a little and let it float drag free, often the fly will sink 2 or 3 inches as it passes him. As the fly gets to the end of the float he will let out more line so the fly will sink a little more. When the line tightens at the end of the swing, the fly will rise up like a hatching natural.

If you don't know the water, it depends on what you see the fish doing. If they are clearly taking floating insects, go with the dry fly line and the drag free float. If the insects are clearly moving before they are recycled into fish, then put some motion into the fly. Binoculars are helpful in seeing what is happening. If the fish are taking the caddis just under the surface, then give the fly a quick strip to sink it, and fish it out the way Jim does. In fact one reference recommends using a sink tip line in lakes. Jim also mentioned lake fishing from a float tube or pontoon boat using a sink tip line. Granted it is more fun when a fish grabs the fly off the surface, but if that doesn't work, experiment. Also, fish riffles where cased caddis break free, and weed beds

Materials list:

Hook: Mustad 94840, 10-14 (References list sizes 8 to 20)

Thread: Uni 8/0 olive

Body: Yarn, yellow or orange

Hackle: Brown

Shellback: Deer hair, light early season and darker in August.

Tail: Tip ends of deer hair shellback

Tying steps:



1. Put a thread base on the hook from front to the bend. Tie in yarn at bend. Jim ties a thinner body than some other tiers so he uses two strands of a four strand yarn. Early season he uses size 10 or maybe 12 hooks and a yellow body. Midseason he uses a size 12 hook and light orange body, and then in late season he goes down to a 14 hook and dark orange body.



2. Select a feather with barbs about a gap width to less than a gap and a half long. A gap and a half is really too long. Tie feather in by the tip between barb and point.



3. Wind thread forward to about two eye widths back from the eye. Put at least one wrap of yarn behind the feather and then wrap forward to the thread and secure.



4. Wrap the hackle around hook to where it is tied in before starting to palmer it forward. Put an extra wrap at the front to end the spiral. Secure hackle, trim excess, and build a thread base for tying in the deer hair.



5. Find the middle portion of the hackle and pull the barbs down to make a little space for the shellback. Pick deer hair that matches the hook length. If hair is too long then hair on the fly will be mostly solid fibers that will not float. Use lighter deer hair in early part of season, in July start moving toward darker hair, and use darker hair later in August and September. Select a small bunch of deer hair, maybe a little more than a match stick in diameter when you twist it, clean out under fur and stack it. Trim butts so there will be enough hair at back of hook for the tail. Pre glue if you are going to make a hard head. It also makes tying the hair a little easier and provides something in there to keep hair in place.



1. Finish head at front of hook: whip finish and trim thread. Pick up deer hair and with long tag in back build a thread base at back of body. Then tie down deer hair securely with long tag and whip finish. Break off any deer hair that was pulled down too far by the thread. If there is quite a bit of hair pulled downed reducing the size of the bundle next time might help.

Closing comments: It is actually a pretty easy fly to tie and imitates more than just caddis. Sow bugs and other critters floating down stream can be imitated with this pattern, so keep alert for strikes when the fly swings through riffles or tail outs. It can be tied with an Elk Hair Caddis type of head which is trimmed on an upward angle from eye to rear. The most important thing is that it catches a lot of fish for a lot of anglers.

There are many ways of tying a Tied Down Caddis. One used raffia for the shellback, and another secured the deer hair at the bend and then wrapped the body. Jim thinks that Audry Joy, while not the developer of the pattern, probably developed the method of tying the Tied Down Caddis described above. It is a good production technique that she adapted to use on her sewing machine. She tied a lot of Tied Down Caddis flies for the Meier & Frank store in Portland, OR.

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