

Sunriver Anglers Fly Tying Corner
Cripple CDC Parachute Blue Wing Olive (BWO)
By Phil Fischer



The moist cool days induced by this early winter rain and snow are perfect to be out fishing the Fall River and Crooked River with Blue Wing Olive mayfly imitations. BWO mayflies hatch mid-day on days like today that feature highs in the mid-40's, and light rain. Hatches can be intense and blanket the water with these insects. The BWO will float for an extended period on the surface, and waiting trout know that and intercept them willingly. But the hatch can also be a very frustrating one for the fly fisher. Seemingly minor differences in your presentation, fly size or color, can make the difference between fooling a wary trout, or endless refusals. I know I've experienced trout rising slowly to take my fly pattern during a BWO hatch, only to have it seemingly "give me the middle fin" as it subtly refuses my offer. The Fall River in particular can be challenging during a BWO hatch. It often calls for leaders down to 6X, and occasionally to 7X.

During intense BWO hatches, the trout key on certain triggers as they choose which fly to take and which to refuse. Two important triggers are fly stage and movement. I chose the Cripple

CDC Parachute Blue Wing Olive pattern to demonstrate the first important trigger. Trout learn very young to key in on cripples for the simple reason that a cripple won't fly away just as the fish expends energy to intercept it. By cripple, it means a mayfly that hasn't fully emerged from its nymphal shuck, or a mayfly that was not successful in breaking the surface tension of the water and remained in the surface film, rather than hatching. I spent time filming rising trout on the Fall River some years ago during a BWO hatch. And much to my surprise, when I ran the video on a big screen TV, it was very clear almost all of the insects taken by rising trout were cripples. This pattern, with its trailing shuck and low profile on the water, does a nice job imitating the cripple BWO.

The second important trigger during a BWO hatch is movement. Often trout get very selective and key in on something that moves on the surface, like a BWO mayfly struggling to break out of its nymphal shuck. I tied this pattern with a dubbed Olive CDC, which sticks out like the mayfly's legs, and gives an impression of subtle movement. But often I will also try and impart movement on my fly offering. A very slight wiggle of the rod tip held high above the water can yield just enough movement on the fly to trick a tough and selective trout. Try this technique and pattern next time you're on the water fishing the BWO hatch. I think you'll be surprised with the results.

Cripple CDC Parachute Blue Wing Olive Materials List

Hook: TMC 100 or Daiichi 1180 standard dry fly hook in Sizes 16-18

Thread: Dark Olive 6/0 or 8/0 thread

Trailing Shuck: Medium Olive Brown Zelon

Abdomen: Dark Olive Biot

Thorax: Dubbed Olive CDC

Wing: Dark Dun dyed elk hair or Poly Yarn

Hackle: Whiting Dyed Dark Dun Saddle Hackle to match hook size

Tying Instructions:

1. Select a small clump of Elk hair. Clean the hair with a comb to remove all the under fur and stack in a hair stacker. Tie in the wing at the 2/3's point on the hook and wind several wraps over the butts towards the back of the hook. Trim the butts at a 45 degree angle. The wing length should be 2 times the gape of the hook. With your thumb, push the hair up and back. Wind the thread in front of the wing building a small cone to push the wing to an upright position. Post the wing with several wraps of thread.

2. Tie in a sparse clump of Zelon at the back of the Bump left from tying in the wing and wind back to the tail set position on the hook. To lock the trailing shuck in place, take an additional wrap in front of the tail and one wrap under the tail. The shuck should be approximately the length of the body (abdomen, thorax and head of the fly).
3. Tie in a turkey biot by the tip. The translucent side of the biot should be positioned forward, and the opaque side should be back. Lightly glue the abdomen before winding the biot. Wind the biot forward with 4-6 wraps to create a nice segmented effect on the abdomen.
4. Spin the CDC dubbing material onto the thread and wind forward to the base of the wing. Enough dubbing fiber should remain on the thread to complete the head. This dubbing will help secure the hackle in place when it is attached to the hook.
5. Prepare a hackle feather by stripping the barbs from the feather up to the point where no more than 1/4 of the barb is web. With the shiny side of the feather facing you, strip several more barbs from the side of the feather (1/8th of an inch or less) that will rest against the wing on the first wrap to help insure that the barbs set properly. I prefer the longer Whiting Dry Fly Saddles in the right size, as they are easier to handle and one can tie multiple flies from the same feather.
6. Lightly cement the head and base of the wing. Tie in the hackle with the remaining dubbing immediately in front of the wing pointing away from you, with the shiny side facing up. Wind the hackle counter clockwise with the first wrap at the base of the wing. Each succeeding wind of the hackle should be underneath the preceding. If tied correctly, each wind will push the preceding upwards to create a clean looking parachute. The last wind should be "dropped" over the head and tied off. Trim the hackle tip and whip finish. Tying Tip: To avoid catching numerous hackle fibers in the whip finish, wrap the dubbing for the head firmly against the base of the wing to build up a small cone. When the hackle is wound around the wing, this cone will force the hackle fibers upward and out of the way of the whip finish.