

Black Trailing Shuck Caddis

Sunriver Angler's Fly Tying Corner

By: Phil Fischer



On one of our high country lakes last week, I was once again reminded of a cardinal rule of fly fishing; if it isn't working, change! About 11:00 in the morning the Callibaetis hatch began. And just as predictably I started seeing rising fish, big ones! I thought to myself that I had this day nailed, as I had tied a number of my favorite Callibaetis patterns for this trip. I reached into my box for a Callibaetis Spinner, which is the bug I was observing on the water and tied it onto 4X tippet. Soon a fish wandered into casting distance and I put a good cast in front of it. I waited for the inevitable rise, and nothing happened. Soon after, another shot at a nice fish and not so much as a refusal. After several more shots at working trout without a take, I started to wonder if I had the right stage of the Callibaetis tied on my tippet. So I changed to a Callibaetis cripple, and was ignored equally to the first pattern I had tried. Hmmmm. Something I was doing wasn't quite right. So I set my rod down and just watched. Sure enough the answer was right in front of me. While I had been captivated by the Callibaetis on the water, the trout were ignoring those and were taking a small black caddis. Bingo! In looking a little closer at the water, there were lots of caddis, and just a few Callibaetis. And these big trout had been taking the caddis for awhile, and were keyed into this hatch. I quickly tied a Black/Rust Trailing Shuck Caddis as a dry dropper about 24 inches below the Callibaetis dry fly and started casting. I chose to fish this pattern as a dropper for two reasons: first, I could see the Callibaetis dry quite clearly, but the caddis was dark and very hard to see. Secondly, I wasn't quite ready to believe these fish were truly

ignoring the much larger callibaetis in favor of the smaller caddis. However, it didn't take long to learn the answer. The first good cast I put in front of one of these rainbows resulted in a nice heavy 22" rainbow, and it took the caddis!

I'm glad I had a few of this pattern in my boxes that day. For our local waters, a little black traveling sedge or caddis is a common insect, and it would pay to carry a few of these in your fly box as well.

Pattern Recipe:

Hook: Tiemco 100 or Daiichi 1180, size 14-16

Thread: Black 6/0 – 8/0

Trailing Shuck: Light tan Zelon

Abdomen: Blend of Black Antron dubbing (75%) and Rust Dubbing (25%)

Wing: Dark Natural Whitetail Deer from the front shoulder of the animal.

Hackle: Whiting Dark Dun Midge Saddle (undersized by 1-2 hook sizes)

Tying Instructions:

1. Tie on the thread at the 2/3's point of the hook (wing-set position). Tie in a sparse clump of Zelon back to the tail-set position. Trim the Zelon to a length about equal to the length of the Abdomen of the fly.
2. Blend the black dubbing with the rust dubbing by felting it between your fingers repeatedly until it is fully blended. Alternatively, use a spinning blade type coffee grinder. Dub the abdomen with this mixture to form a nice tapered body to the fly.
3. Select a sparse clump of deer hair. Take particular care to clean out all the under-fur from the hair. Place the cleaned hair tip down in a hair stacker tool and gently tap the tips of the hair even. Remove from the stacker and tie on at the wing-set position. The tips should extend slightly beyond the bend of the hook, but not nearly to the end of the trailing shuck.
4. Prepare the saddle hackle by stripping about an eighth inch of the barbs off the stem at the base of the feather. Tie in at the back of the thorax at about a 45 degree angle on the opposite side of the hook from the tier. The shiny side of the hackle should face towards the rear of the fly and the dull side towards the front (dry fly style).
5. Wind the saddle hackle with 4-5 wraps and tie off in at the head of the fly and trim the excess, whip finish and lightly glue the head.