

Sunriver Angler's Fly Tying Corner

By: Phil Fischer



The other day I was on one of our high country lakes and about mid-day began to see the tell-tale slashing rise of a trout taking damsel nymphs along a line of tules at the edge of the lake. The rise form is a dead give-away that damsels are on the water. Often the trout will make a splashy swirly rise when taking this insect in the shallows. Most of our Central Oregon area lakes have good populations of damsels, and this time of year it is always a good idea to keep an eye out for this hatch around mid-day. The nymph ranges in color from tan to dark olive. It is about an inch to an inch and a quarter long at maturity. The hatch should get better and better through June.

For this month's pattern I chose a foam damsel. This is an excellent fly to imitate the emerging damsel nymph. The nymph progresses toward hatching by swimming along the surface until they come to a stick or tule that will enable them to climb out of the water and emerge into the adult stage of the insect. It is during this swim that damsels are so vulnerable to hungry trout. Often one can fish in shallow water and sight cast to fish trying to pick off these insects. The nymph swims by wiggling its tail vigorously, followed by periodic rest stops. For that reason, a long wispy tail on the fly is important. The foam on this pattern, coupled with the heavy wire hook of a TMC 105 allows the fly to sink under the water's surface, but not too far. When fishing this fly use a dry fly line and take short quick strips, followed by pauses. Often the trout will take the fly when it is stopped on the retrieve.

As I lifted the anchor a little while later, sure enough there were a dozen or so damsel nymphs clinging to the rope as they moved toward something that allowed them to climb out of the water and hatch. That only confirmed what I already knew.....damsels were on!

Pattern Recipe:

Hook: Tiemco TMC 105 or similar short shank hook.

Eyes: Black Plastic eyes or Monofilament melted at the ends.

Thread: Olive or Tan 6/0 Uni thread.

Tail: Olive or Tan Marabou.

Abdomen and Thorax: Olive or Tan Marabou

Ribbing: Fine wire in Gold, or Copper.

Wing Case: Olive or Tan 2mm Closed Cell Foam.

Tying Instructions:

1. Tie in the eyes using multiple figure wraps until secure at about the 2/3's point of the hook, leaving room for the head.
2. Attach the wire at the tail to be used later for ribbing.
3. Tie in a bunch of wispy marabou approximately 1 inch long to form the tail.
4. Tie in another bunch of long wispy marabou at the tail set position by the tips of the feather. This will enable a nice tapered body towards the head of the fly.
5. Tie in a thin 3/32" wide piece of foam at the back of the thorax.
6. Wind the bunch of marabou forward through the abdomen, through the thorax and around the eyes once with a figure eight wrap. Tie off at the head and trim the excess.
7. Counter wrap the wire over the abdomen and thorax and tie off at the head. Clip the excess.
8. Fold the foam forward through the eyes to the head. Tie off and clip the excess. Whip finish and lightly glue the head.

If you have questions or would like additional information about damsel patterns, please don't hesitate to email me. Or if you have suggestions on future patterns to feature in this column, I welcome your input. I can be reached at Philfischer@sbcglobal.net.