

# The Kennebago Muddler

June 3, 2006

Working with deer hair seems to intimidate many aspiring fly tyers. There's something about handling those bulky bunches of hair and trying to make them behave that just doesn't seem like fly tying. But not to be fearful! New threads that have come along in recent years make spinning hair much easier. There's a synthetic thread called gel-spun, or simply, gel thread. It's incredibly strong, and it's a slippery material, which in this case is a good thing, as hair can be spun over it, almost as though it were bare hook shank. But bare shank's still the easiest.

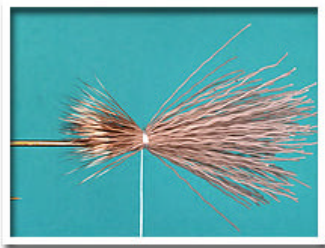
There's also Uni-Nylon, from the Uni Products Company that has given us so many excellent products. It comes in two strengths; 210 denier and 70 denier. The 210 is excellent for deer hair work. Only two colors are presently offered; black and white. However, this thread takes coloring with a waterproof marker very well.

A couple of basic considerations regarding deer hair. First, look for hair that is soft and what we call "pulpy", especially in the spot where the thread will intercept the bundle. Hair which is of hard texture will not spin and flair as required for successful head/collar work.

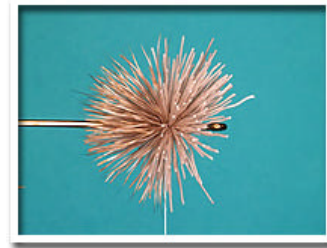
Second, and this is closely related to the preceding; select hair that is of the right length for the fly size at hand. A good rule of thumb is that the contact location of the thread should be at least half way from the tip ends to the butt ends. Why? Because that's where the hair will be have the most desirable texture for spinning and flaring. The two photos show this clearly.

Here's a simple Muddler pattern that effectively demo's the new threads, and shows the technique for spinning deer hair.

Hook	3XL and longer. Here, the 4XL Daiichi model 1750.
Thread	White 210 denier Uni-Nylon.
Body	Flat silver tinsel.
Underwing (optional)	A small bunch of gray squirrel tail hair.
Wing	A mallard or teal flank feather, tied per instructions in the photo sequence.
Head/Collar	Fine gray, beige, or tan deer hair, spun and trimmed.



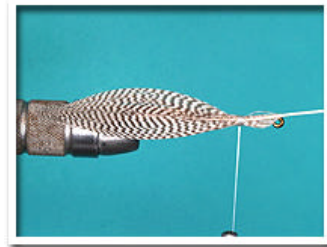
An example of what sort of deer hair *NOT* to use, and the wrong spot for the thread to intercept it.



Here, we see that soft, pulpy, shorter deer hair literally bursts into a spun ball which can then be trimmed into a good-looking collar and head.

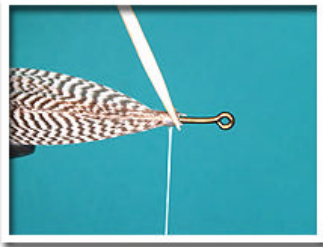


*Step 1.* Start the thread well back from the hook eye. Tie in the tinsel here, and wrap a two-layer body. Then tie on the squirrel tail hair underwing on top of the thread wraps that were used to tie off the body tinsel.



*Step 2.* Select a large mallard flank feather with a centered quill and, with three turns only, tie it on over the thread wraps that secured the underwing. Then gently pull the front end of the feather forward a bit beneath the thread wraps. Use a slightly upward motion, so that the wraps don't slip forward.

## The Kennebago Muddler continued



*Step 3.* Trim off the excess feather material and rub a small droplet of super glue (Zap-A-Gap, Plastic Surgery, etc.) into the thread wraps. Don't proceed further until the glue is completely dry. Rubbing with a toothpick accelerates this process.



*Step 4.* Cut a bunch of deer hair, following the guidelines in the text and photos above. Run the hair through a stacker (hair evener) to align the tips.



*Step 5.* First, "sharpen" the thread by spinning the bobbin clockwise if you're a right-handed tier, or counterclockwise if you're a lefty. Then set the bundle of hair in position and take three wraps of thread, one on top of the other, under moderate tension.



*Step 6.* Now exert firm tension and release the hair, allowing it to flare and spin around the hook shank. When full and equal distribution is obtained, re-grip the hair by the collar and sneak a few additional thread wraps, under firm tension, into the spun hair, on top of the original wraps. Then bring the thread forward between the hair butts, stroke them into an upright position, and make a whip finish knot.



*Step 7.* Trim the butt hairs to form the head.



*Step 8.* The finished fly.

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