

Ultimately Simple Foam Hoppers

June 6, 2001

Soon it will be grasshopper season. This is especially important for those of you who may be traveling out west, or fishing spring creeks during the warmer months. There are quite a few hopper patterns, some more detailed and complex than others. I have one of my own to offer. The justification for adding it to the pile is two-fold; durability and flotation. It is not as close an imitation as some of the others, but it seems to work, and that's all I ask.

The main component in my fly is the closed-cell foam body, which comes from a company called Flycraft's line of closed-cell foam products. They offer the material in a number of prefabricated forms; ant bodies, beetle bodies, frog bodies, and of course, hopper bodies. A variety of sizes is available. Colors are rather limited, but that problem is easily solved with a waterproof marker, as Flycraft foam accepts coloring quite readily. Flycraft foam will also accept water-base acrylic paints, as is the case with the hopper body shown in the photos.

If you don't find the products in your local fly shop, visit the web site, www.flycraft.com. There you will find information on what's available and where to buy the stuff, including instructions on how to order direct, should that be necessary. As my foam hopper evolved, I tried a number of materials for making the legs. At this writing, the best solution I've come up with is to impregnate a large, long-fibered feather with a flexible adhesive of some sort, and peel off strips of appropriate width for the legs. The legs you'll see in the tying sequence were taken from a turkey tail feather that I had impregnated with a water-base adhesive called Soft Body, a product of Angler's Choice, which is a brand name of a company known as Gone Fishin' Enterprises, Inc.. There are two viscosities. The thicker one is works best for this purpose. I'm sure there are other products that will do the job, but this stuff is the best I've found so far.

There is one more preparatory step in making the legs. After separating two identical strips, tie a simple over-hand knot in the middle of each one. This forms the knee joint. Once the legs are ready, just follow the captioned photo sequence for tying the fly.

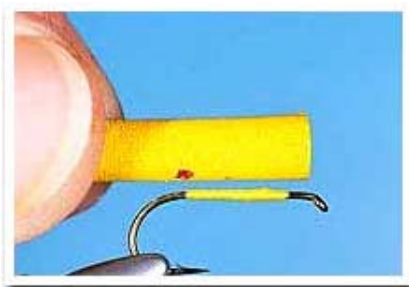
Here's the dressing:

Hook	Regular dry fly. Here, a Daiichi model 1180.
Thread	Red 8/0 Uni-Thread
Foundation	Yellow Uni-Stretch
Body	Flycraft closed-cell foam hopper body.
Wing	Deer body hair.
Legs	Narrow strips of turkey tail feather, treated with flexible head lacquer, then knotted.
Also	A heavy needle, and Zap-A-Gap or similar.
Optional	Water-base acrylic paint. Here, Delta Ceramcoat.

Tying Steps:

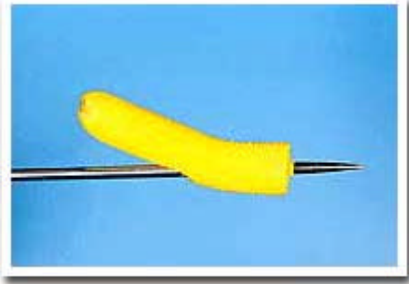


Step 1. Wrap a base layer with Uni-Stretch.

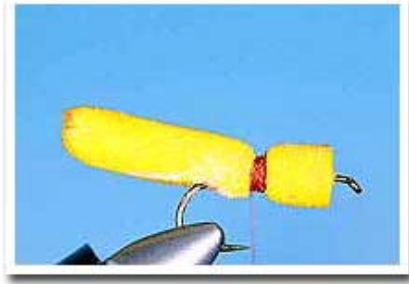


Step 2. Mark where to insert the needle into the body.

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Step 3. Create a channel through the foam with a heavy needle.



Step 4. Working quickly, coat the base layer with Zap-A-Gap, then insert the hook as shown. Tie on here with the red thread, thus separating the head and body and creating a base for the wing and legs.



Step 5. The wing tied on.



Step 6. The legs are formed by tying a simple over-hand knot in a narrow strip of feather that has been treated with a flexible adhesive.



Step 7. Affixing the legs completes the hopper.

For other Fly Tying Projects, please visit my website at www.dicktalleur.com. You will also find information about past and upcoming guided fishing trips, my books and instructional videotapes, recommended products, and upcoming classes and shows.

