

The Fly Tyer's Corner Recipe by Jeff Hoelter

CDC Elk Hair Caddis

The Elk Hair Caddis (EHC) is an easy to tie dry fly that should be in every fly box. The original, as tied by Al Troth in the late 1950s, included a dry fly hackle palmered over dry dubbing and reinforced by a counter wrap of fine gold wire. This is then topped by a clump of elk hair that forms both the wing and a small head at the same time.

Through the years there have been countless variations and material substitutions as most everyone who ties this fly develops their own technique or subtle change to make this fly their own.

My favorite update is substituting Cul de Canard (CDC) for the dubbed body, hackle, and wire. This greatly simplifies the procedure and, I believe, improves flotation on an already very buoyant fly. One method, as brought to us by Hans Weilenman of the Netherlands, is to tie the CDC in by the tip at the back of the hook and wind forward with touching wraps allowing the barbs of the feather to flow freely toward the rear. This technique generates a lot of movement even when the fly is sitting motionless in the water.

But the method I'm going to describe is to spin the CDC feather into a rope after tying the tip to the back of the hook, and then wrapping forward to create the body of the fly. I believe this is a Marc Petitjean technique but I have to give props to Chris Johnson at Living Waters for showing me how good the segmented body looks using this method.

I'm not sure there is a wrong way to fish this fly. Drift it through riffles or seams. Dead drift it near the bank under tree limbs or next to vegetation. In flat water, if it attracts no attention just sitting on the water, try skittering it across the surface like an insect trying to escape the film. This is also a great fly for Tenkara fishers.

I plan to demonstrate this fly before the April meeting so stop by if you get stuck. Also don't forget the fly tying sessions available on Tuesday evenings at Sportsman's Finest, and on Wednesday evenings at Living Waters in Round Rock.

Materials list:

Hook: Tiemco 101, size 12-18

Thread: GSP 50

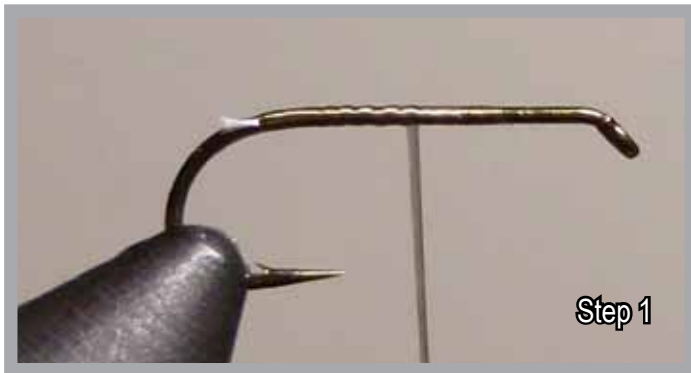
Body: CDC feather, tan, yellow, olive, black, all good

Wing: Elk Hair



Fly Tyer Cont.

Step 1: Tie in the thread and lay down a base ending up at the center of the hook shank



Step 2: Select a CDC feather and tie in on the hook with one loose wrap. The base of the feather should be over the bend of the hook.



Step 3: Grip the base of the feather and pull it slowly to the left allowing the loose wrap of thread to gather the feather barbs. Stop just as the tip clears the hook eye. Take a few more wraps with the thread.



Step 4: Now wrap the feather down toward the bend of the hook stopping just above the barb and wrap forward again to just behind the hook eye.



Step 5: Clip the base of the CDC feather with your hackle pliers and twist it 4 or 5 times to make a bit of a rope with the feather. Wrap this "rope" forward with touching wraps stopping just behind the eye. You may have to twist the rope again after a few turns to keep it tight. At this point the body of the fly will likely look very ragged with the CDC barbules that have escaped the "rope". These should be trimmed close to resemble the picture.



Step 6: Clip a small bunch of elk hair and clean out the fuzzies. Place the tips down in a stacker to even them and put them on top of the hook holding them very tightly with your material hand right at the tie in point just behind the hook eye. Make the first wrap of thread with just medium amount of pressure (it should just start to cause the elk to fold). Each additional wrap should be a bit tighter than the one before. Don't let go with the material hand until you have 5 or 6 wraps holding the elk hair. You should now be able to pinch both sides of the hook to support the tips and the butts as well as the hook and pull straight down on the thread to make sure everything is tight. Now take several turns of thread behind the hook eye and in front of the hair and whip finish. Separate the wing tips from the thicker butt section and trim the butts close at an angle to form the head of the fly. Apply a little head cement and it should be ready to fish.

