

The Fly Tyer's Corner by Jack Lehman

Finger Mullet

There have been a lot of discussions and demonstrations of mullet patterns at the Wednesday night fly tying group. This is a pattern that was developed by Swisher and Richards a long time ago and has been written up in a couple of books and magazines. It is designed to mimic the three to five inch finger mullet that are present in the bays and flats year round. These are the young of the much larger mullet, and like the older versions, they have a round body and very large eyes. Most of the predator fish found in the backwaters will readily target mullet, sometimes selectively.

Tied as described, this fly will swim very near the surface, or it can be fished deeper by using a sink tip or intermediate line. The mullet it imitates are also usually found at the surface. This mullet fly will give the appearance of bulk without the associated weight because of the use of the wispy hairs at the front and from the yarn. The wool it its various forms used in this fly will absorb some water, making the fly a little heavier, but not too much so.

Several types of wool are used, or can be used in this fly as well as substitutes. The wool used here for the tail and the front wings come from a material sold as sculpin wool. It's a sheared sheepskin on the leather. The material can be 1 1/2 to 2 inches long. This isn't long enough for the topping, which must be the whole length of the fly. Here I used streamer hair that is also sold on the skin, but it is unshaired and it can be 6 - 8 inches long. Another source that can be used to meet both of these needs is sold in weaving stores as roving. This is the raw material that can be used to spin yarn.

Oh yeah. Yarn! The yarn I am using here is a polyester/mohair blend. The original was tied with a straight mohair yarn, and there are many other types of yarn available which would provide the fibers sticking out the way it does here. The blend I have used here provides a lot of bulk to help build up the profile of the body. A finer yarn might require several layers to achieve the same look.

Tied in the size shown, this is a mullet imitation. With a few modifications, it can become a bay anchovy pattern. Tie the fly on a smaller #4 or 6 hook, and tie it much sparser. Use the 100% mohair yarn if you can find it because of its lower bulk. Instead of the pearl flashabou, use a single strand of silver flashabou on each side to represent the prominent lateral line found on the anchovies.

Materials

Hook: Standard Saltwater Hook, Size 2-1/0 (Mustad 34007 #2 shown)

Thread: Monofilament thread

Rear Wing: White sheephair (sculpin hair shown)

Body: White mohair yarn or similar

Front Wings: White sheephair and a few strands of pearl flashabou

Topping: Gray sheephair sold as streamer hair

Gills: Pink or red hair

Eyes: Large stick-on, anchored with goop

Step 1: Sharpen and debarb the hook.

Place it in the vice, start the thread at the front and make a smooth wrap to the bend of the hook. Cut off a small bunch of the white hair, about the thickness of a pencil lead. Tie it in at the bend of the hook so that the tail is 1 1/2 to 2 times the length of the shank. Tie down any excess material along the shank of the hook to help create a smooth underbody, ending an eye length behind the eye. Cut off any excess.



Step 2: Tie in the length of yarn along the hook shank and return the thread to the front of the fly. Note that by tying in these materials along the shank instead of just cutting off the excess allows you to avoid a bump at the tie in point and to create a smooth body.

Step 3: Wrap the yarn forward in tight wraps, stroking the fuzzy strands back away from the core as you wrap to keep the strands from being trapped underneath the yarn. Tie off the yarn about an eye length behind the eye and cut off any excess.



Step 4: Tie in a couple of strands of pearl flashabou along either side of the body. Take a piece twice as long as you need, fold it over the thread, and then wrap it down with the thread.



Step 5: Tie in a small bunch of the sheephair at the front so that it forms a wispy curtain all around the body of the fly.



The Fly Tyer's Corner continued

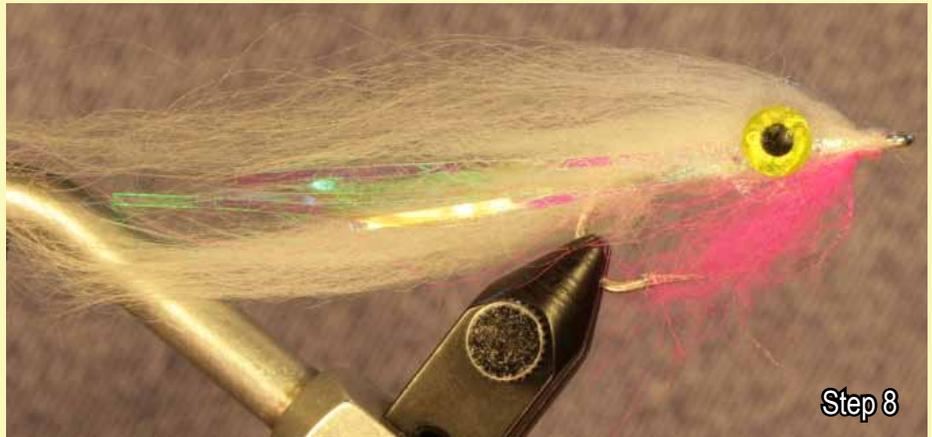
Step 6: Tie in a small bunch of the gray sheephair at the top of the fly. I use sheep streamer hair for this because of its length. Rather than cutting off any excess, fold it back over the top and tie it down as well. A darker gray than this would be nice if you can find it.



Step 7: Tie in a small amount of pink or red hair at the throat of the fly to simulate gills. Build a small head with your thread and tie off. Cut off your excess thread.



Step 8: Place a small dab of goop or similar clear caulk where the eyes will go. Poke at it a little with your bodkin to drive some of the goop into the hair. This will help anchor the eyes. Stick the eyes in place. Repeat on the other side of the fly, being sure to balance the placement of the eyes.



As always, if you would like additional assistance with this or any pattern, feel free to join us at the AFF Fly Tying group that meets on Wednesday evenings from 4 to 9 pm at the Dart Bowl (5700 Grover Ave., behind McCallum HS). Also, remember that most of the recent AFF Newsletters are available online at <http://austinflyfishers.com/> and include the previous fly tying columns. If there is some fly or technique you would like to see featured in these articles, please let me know.

