

Slumpbuster

When the waters cool down in winter, the fish naturally slow down. The insects that are available are smaller and less prevalent. The crayfish have hidden away for the winter. Baitfish become more of a target for the larger fish, both trout and the basses and sunfish. But with the colder water, the predator fish aren't as active and won't chase as much. You have to start using flies that go deeper and slower, while still having enough movement and action to entice a strike. John Barr's Slumpbuster is just such a fly.

There are very few new ideas in fly tying, just different ways of combining new or different materials. This fly takes a lot from the traditional feather-winged Matuka-style flies and incorporates some newly available materials. Squirrel zonkers are very similar to the rabbit zonkers, except that the fur is usually shorter and denser than rabbit. Essentially they are long, thin strips cut from the cured hide of a squirrel. On a zonker strip, the fur naturally flows along the length of the strip. A cross-cut zonker is very similar, except that the fur lays perpendicular to the strip, and has its own special uses. When used as a design component of a fly, the squirrel zonker can provide a great deal of the illusion of movement necessary to attract predators, without sacrificing time in the strike zone.

The cone head on this style of fly will create a jigging action. As the weight of the cone pulls the fly through the water, the squirrel hair will stream back, creating a lot of the illusion of movement. Try to not use too heavy a cone. The flowing hair will slow the fall of the fly. Fish this fly on a longer leader and a floating fly line. Most of your strikes will come on the fall, so you need to stay in contact with the fly to be able to detect strikes. If you are floating, throw the fly towards to bank and strip it back. If you are anchored or wading, cast the fly slightly upstream and across, mending upstream as you let the fly drift down. Once the fly is

below you, let it swing across the current as the line comes tight. In still water, fish the fly slowly, allowing it time to get deep to where the fish are. Vary your retrieves and the lengths of your strips until you find what is working, then rinse and repeat.

This fly is tied in many color combinations. The one shown here, black over white, would be good on a semi-overcast day. Other common colors are all olive (both squirrel and braid), Rust squirrel over copper braid, natural over copper, black over blue, all white, or try to match whatever forage is found in your location. Tied in the larger sizes, expect to interest those larger bass and trout that have outgrown feeding on nymphs. Tie some on the smaller sizes and you'll be amazed at how many small bass and sunfish there actually are in your waters.

There's nothing really difficult in the tying of this fly. Just a couple of materials, no unusual or expensive tools or materials are needed, and the fly is very durable once completed. You'll find that the zonker tail rarely wraps around the hook bend, especially if you remember to wrap the first turn of the braid under the tail to lift it up. The squirrel itself isn't going to get chewed up very quickly, and the wire wraps used to tie down the zonker along the body aren't going anywhere. And tucking the final wraps of the collar under the cone, along with the whip finish, protects the final tie in point from wear.

MATERIALS –

Hook: 3X – 4X Streamer Hook, size 4 – 12 (Tiemco 5263, Mustad S74SZ shown)

Thread: 70 or 140 denier to match wing

Cone: Gold Size large (4-6 hook), or medium 8-12 hook)

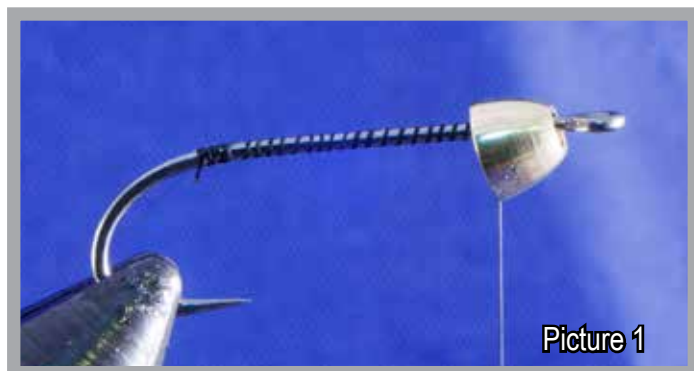
Rib: Ultra Wire, size Brassie, to match wing

Body: Sparkle Braid or similar

Wing/Tail: Pine Squirrel Zonker

Collar: Pine Squirrel Zonker

Step 1: Pinch the barb and thread the hook through the cone. Place the hook in the vise. Start your thread at the bend of the hook and wrap forward, building a base, to just behind the cone.



Picture 1

Step 2: Tie in your wire on top of the hook, starting about a cone length behind the cone. This is to leave room to wrap the collar in a later step. Tie your Sparkle Braid in at the same point. Bind the wire and braid down onto the hook all the way back to the bend of the hook. Leave your thread at the bend.



Picture 2

Fly Tyer's Corner Continued

Step 3: Choose a squirrel zonker strip. Note how the hair on the strip is all oriented in one direction. You will tie in the strip so that the hair flows back from the eye of the hook. Use your scissor tips or a bodkin to part the hair about a hook's length from the tail end. Tie the zonker strip down at this point directly over the bend of the hook



Step 4: Pull the front section of the zonker strip back over the tail and wrap your thread forward to just behind the eye.



Step 5: Take a single wrap with the braid, under the tail and over the hook.



Step 6: Continue wrapping the braid forward in tight, but not overlapping, wraps to the tie in point near the front. Be sure to leave some gap behind the cone. Leave your thread at the front.



Step 7: Pull the forward end of the zonker strip to the front and tie it down at the end of the braid. Do NOT cut off the excess zonker



Step 8: You will now bind down the zonker wing with 5-6 wraps of the wire. Again, use your scissor tips or bodkin to part the hair on the zonker where you will want to place the wire wrap. Wrap the wire over the wing leather at this point while trying to avoid binding down any hair. When you have finished binding down the wing, make a couple of wraps over the wire in front of the wing to tie it down. Cut off any excess wire.



Fly Tyer's Corner Continued

Step 9: Pull the front end of the zonker back and add some super glue to the shank of the hook just behind the cone (Optional). Make two or three wraps with the zonker strip around the hook tucked behind and under the cone to create the collar. Bind the zonker strip down with a few wraps just behind the cone and cut off any excess zonker. Tuck the final wrap of the zonker under the cone head if you can. Whip finish your thread behind the cone and cut off the thread.

Step 10: If the cone head is loose, you will need to jam it permanently back against the fly body. You can accomplish this by either 1: getting some superglue under the cone and jam it back against the body, or 2: Restart your thread in front of the cone and behind the hook eye and build up a dam of thread that forces the cane back (Shown).

