

The Fly Tyer's Corner by Jack Lehman

Thin Mint Bugger

Spring is when bass and many other fishes build their nests and lay their eggs. Just as fish are often prey, their eggs are also a target for many predators. One of the primary predators of eggs is the crawfish. Fish that often have no interest in feeding will attack a predator to protect their nest. A sure way to prove this is to crawl a crawfish imitation near pre-spawn or spawning bass. They will attack a crawfish (or an imitation) just to get it away from their nests. If you are throwing at an active nest, try to target the smaller fish as it is most likely the male. Return any fish caught over a nest to the water as soon as possible so that it can continue to guard its nest.

Spring isn't the only time to use crawfish imitations. In our warmer waters, crawfish are available year round and using crawfish imitations can often lead to catches of larger bass and carp. You should always have a selection of crawfish flies in various sizes and weights in your fly box. Here we are presenting a variation of the common woolly bugger that was designed as a crawfish imitation. Like most woolly buggers, it can be easy to tie and uses commonly available materials. Tie this fly in all the sizes recommended, #6 - #12, and experiment with a variety of colors if you choose.

Shown is the traditional tie, using peacock herl and furnace hackle. Peacock herl can be difficult to work with as it easily breaks. The herl step can be replaced by using Peacock Ice Dub. Create a thin dubbing rope using the Ice Dub and wrap up the hook shank. The furnace hackle used for the original can be difficult to find. Furnace is a naturally occurring color of hackle that is black or dark brown at the stem and fades to a lighter brown at the tips. Furnace can be hard to find, and white dyed brown just doesn't have the same effect. Many tyers substitute brown grizzly hackle for the furnace and are happy with the result.

The original fly used black bead heads for the weight, but brass or copper beads, or even coneheads, are often used. Match the size of the weight to the hook size being used to gain the best effect. In the smallest sizes, tyers often add a strand of flashabou or similar material to add a touch of sparkle to the fly. Tie the flashabou in with the copper rib, and wrap it forward between the hackle wraps before you counterwrap with the wire rib.

As mentioned above, when fish are staging in shallow water allow the Thin Mint to sink to the bottom and crawl it toward where the fish are holding. Fish guarding a nest will rarely eat, but they will attack anything that approaches their nest. Set the hook when the fish picks up the fly to move it away from their nest. In deeper waters, you can dead drift the fly in any current to imitate a natural being carried along with the stream. The fly can also be actively stripped to imitate a swimming crawfish. Use long slow strips with definite pauses to more closely resemble the natural.

Use a loop knot to tie on the fly. Cast up and across and allow the fly to sink before you start working it. In deeper or faster moving water, you probably should opt for a sinking type line rather than a heavier fly to maintain the natural action of the fly.

MATERIALS –

Hook: 3X-4X Streamer hook, #6-#12 (Daiichi #2220, Tiemco 5262)

Head: Black Bead (1/8" for #12, 5/32 for #8-10, 3/16 for #6)

Thread: 3/0 or 6/0 Olive or Brown

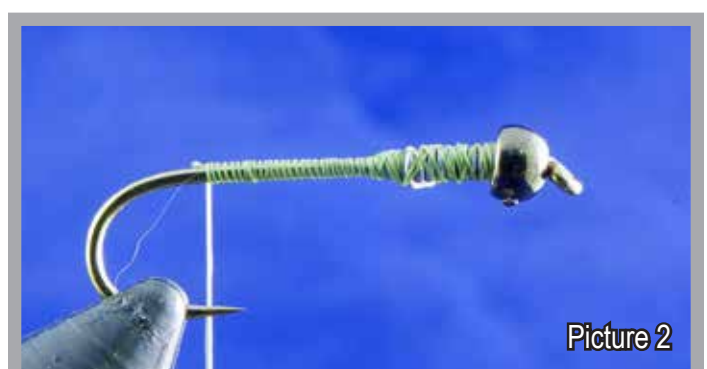
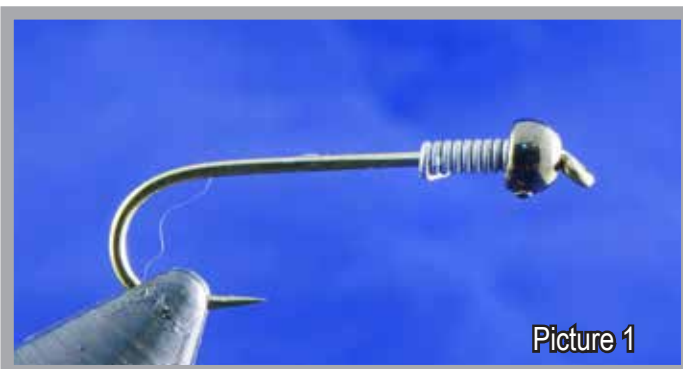
Tail: Marabou, Olive over Brown over Black

Rib: Small Copper Wire

Hackle: Brown Furnace or Brown Grizzly

Step 1: Place your bead on the hook, so that the small hole slides up next to the hook eye. Optionally, you may add additional weight to the fly at this time by adding lead wraps to the hook shank. Select a lead wire that is approximately the same diameter as your hook shank. Here I have added 10 wraps of .020lead wire.

Step 2: Start your thread behind the bead, or behind the lead wire if you added lead. Build up a thread dam to hold the bead and lead in place and then make a smooth wrap back to the rear of the shank so that the thread is between the hook point and the barb.



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Step 3: Prepare a small bunch of the black marabou by stripping some fibers from the feather stem. The tail should be just a little longer than the length of the hook. Tie the bundle in over the point at the back of the shank and wrap the butt ends of the fibers down along the hook shank. Stop behind the lead, or the bead, and cut off any excess marabou. Tying the fibers in along the length of the hook shank helps create a smooth, even base for the fly body.



Step 4: Prepare a small bundle of the brown marabou and tie it in over the black marabou at the tail. The Brown should be about the same length as the black. Tie the brown marabou down along the shank of the hook and cut off the excess. Return your thread to the rear of the fly.



Step 5: Complete the tail by preparing and adding a bundle of olive marabou, just as you prepared and added the previous bundles. Finish with the thread at the rear of the fly sticking out of the front of the fly.



Step 6: Add the rib before you build the body of the fly. The tie-down wraps will not change the appearance of the body if it is tied in first. Select a piece of the copper wire, at least 4 inches long. Start tying the rib down at the rear of the body and wrap forward. At some point, fold the forward end of the wire back toward the rear, and wrap over it with your thread. This will help lock the wire in place and help prevent you from accidentally pulling it out later. Return your thread to the rear of the fly.



Step 7: Tie in 3-6 pieces of peacock herl at the rear of the fly. You will create a rope with the herl to build a body. Optionally, you can improve the durability of the fly by creating a dubbing loop at the rear of the fly and including it in the rope you create. Create a dubbing loop by pulling your thread toward you, wrap it around a finger, and return the thread to the hook. Make a few wraps at the base of the loop and move your thread to the front of the fly. This is a good place for a half-hitch.



Step 8: Twist the peacock herl (and the dubbing loop, if you created one) into a rope and wrap the rope around the hook shank forward to a point just behind the bead head. Tie off the dubbing rope with a few wraps of thread, and cut off any excess. Leave your thread at the front of the fly.



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Step 9: Prepare a hackle feather by cutting off the fuzz at the base of the fly, leaving about ¼ inch of bare stem to tie the feather in place. Tie the feather down so that the tip of the hackle is facing forward, and the natural curve of the feather is up and toward the rear. You will be wrapping the feather back toward the rear of the hook, and then locking it in place using the copper rib as the tie-down material for the feather.



Step 10: Wrap the hackle feather around the hook body, moving toward the rear. Using a hackle plier attached at the tip of the feather serves the dual purpose of making the feather easier to hold onto, as well as holding the feather in place with its weight when you reach the end of the body. Hold the feather by the tip at the rear of the fly. Take the copper rib and wrap it forward in the opposite direction from how you wrapped the feather. Wiggle the wire back and forth as you move the rib forward to avoid binding any hackle feathers down. By wrapping in the opposite direction, you will bind the hackle feather down at several points along the fly body. When you reach the front, tie off the rib just behind the bead head. Whip finish your thread behind the bead head and cut off any excess thread.

