

Matt's Bug by Jack Lehman (AFF NL October, 2008)

Toward the end of summer and moving into cooler fall weather, subsurface flies become more attractive. There are just fewer insects and other critters available to the fish on the surface. Matt's bug was developed by Matt Jennings to catch bass and other fishes in the clear, deep waters of the San Marcos River. Since its creation, it has traveled to many other parts of the world and caught a lot of different species. I know that I once had a very successful day catching small brook and brown trout in a deep creek coming out of Great Smoky Mountain National Park.

Matt prefers a 2xl downeye nymph hook, while others are using 3xl and 4xl (that's extra long). Extra strong hooks are also recommended as the fish will attack this fly hard. Cast the fly into deep water near structure, and try to keep the slack out of your line as you slowly strip the fly in. My guess is that the fly is taken for a damsel fly nymph. The strike is usually aggressive; you will have no trouble detecting it. If you are getting strikes, but not hooking fish, try pinching off half the length of you tail. The fish may just be striking short.

Black bead chain is occasionally available in the fly shops, but I've had better luck finding the size I use in the ceiling fan parts section of any large box hardware store. The fly was originally tied using adhesive lead tape, which is cut to a length just shorter than the hook shank, and the tapered to a point, creating a right triangle. This is then wrapped around the hook to form a tapered body. This tape can be hard to find (think golf swing-weight tape) and expensive, so I've always substituted heavier diameters of lead wire. You can reproduce the tapered body using thread and your body materials.

Dubbing with Lite Brite or other synthetic materials can be difficult, as the material wants to slide off the thread. I've found that I prefer using the longer Lite Brite hanked materials. I just pull off enough material to tie the fly, catch an end off it under the thread, and then wrap both the thread and the Lite Brite together. If you are using a shorter material, you may have to resort to a dubbing wax to create your dubbing rope. The fly is described as being tied from a size 2 down to a size 16, but I have only tried it in sizes 8-12, as this size mimics the damselfly nymphs that we have growing here, but feel free to experiment.

Materials

Hook: 2xl, 3xl, or 4xl down-eye streamer hook Size 2-16 (Mustad 9674 #10 shown)

Thread: Olive 6/0

Eyes: Medium black bead chain (other colors are optional)

Weight: adhesive backed lead tape or .020 lead wire

Tail: olive marabou with pearl crystal flash highlights

Hackle: Olive saddle hackle

Body: chartreuse Lite Brite or other similar fine-strand mylar



Step 1: Attach the thread behind the hook eye. Build up a bump of thread just behind the eye. Elevating the eyes on this bump seems to improve the look of the fly.



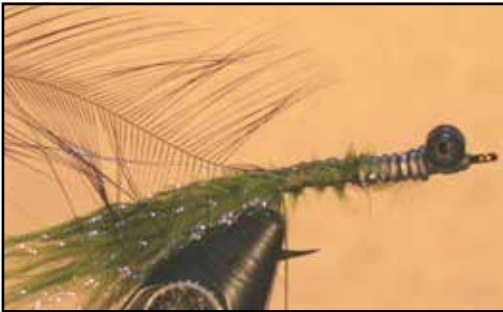
Step 2: Cut a length of two beads from a bead chain. Tie the bead chain eyes in at the top of the thread bump. Hold the eyes in place and take 5 cross wraps in one direction, the 10 wraps in the other direction, followed by 5 more in the first direction. Adjust the eyes so that they are square with the hook. Take about 4 wraps of thread under the eyes but over the hook to cinch down the eyes. Continue your thread wraps back on the hook shank to cover about 1/2 the length of the hook to build a base for the lead.



Step 3: Wrap your lead weight right behind the eye. If you are using the lead tape, cut a triangular shape and create a tapered body. When using the lead wire, wrap it along the hook shank and then use your thread to create a taper behind the wire and to overwrap the wire with several passes of thread. A drop of superglue applied to the eyes and wire wrap will help secure these in place.



Step 4: Prepare a bunch of the olive marabou and tie it in at the bend of the hook. Trim the butt ends of the marabou so that they end at the back of the lead. Its better to tie in a longer tail and adjust it on the water by pinching or cutting off some fiber if the fish seem to be striking short.



Step 5: Optionally, tie in a length of fine wire along the shank of the hook. Tie in the hackle by the tip. Tying from the tip allows the hackle to continue the tapered body effect. The wire may be used to reinforce the wrapped hackle, increasing the durability of the fly.



Step 6-7: Take a pinch of the Lite Brite and dub it around the thread to create a rope. Wrap the dubbed thread up the hook shank to just behind the eyes. Use the dubbing to continue the tapered body effect. Add more Lite Brite as needed until you have achieved the desired effect.





Step 8: Palmer wrap the hackle forward with evenly spaced wraps. Make an extra turn right behind the eye, tie it down with a couple of thread wraps and trim off the excess.



Step 9: (Optional) Wrap the fine wire forward to the eye in the opposite direction you wrapped the hackle. Wiggle the wire back and forth as you move it forward to avoid trapping any of the hackle fibers under the wire. The wire will cross the hackle several times by the time you reach the front. When fish chew on the fly, they can destroy it by cutting through the hackle stem. This wire counter-wrap helps protect the hackle stem.

Step 10: Move the thread in front of the eyes and create a conical head between the hook eye and the bead chain eyes. Finish off the thread and trim the excess.

