

# The Popping Shrimp by Jack Lehman (AFF NL August, 2008)

Like many of you, I didn't start my saltwater experience with a fly rod. For many years, I soaked live shrimp under popping corks as my primary method of fishing. That technique is successful because in shallow water a panicked shrimp will try to escape by skipping across the surface of the water, creating a lot of noise and commotion. Now that I rely upon flies to lure my prey, I use a popping cork to imitate the action by creating the noise, and any fish responding to the commotion would find the waiting shrimp. This fly is designed to imitate the fleeing shrimp. It is light, durable and easy to tie. It can be used to sight cast to fish, or to probe likely holding areas. Cast it out and strip it fairly quickly across the surface. It will ride high in the water and, with the upturned face, will be easy to follow.

Trout will make several strikes at a fly, so don't try to set the hook until you feel the weight of the fish on the fly. Redfish have a mouth and eyes that are down turned so that they can have trouble locating a surface fly and will keep attacking the noise until they have it. Their heads will come way out of the water as they try to locate it. If you try to set the hook as soon as you see a strike, you will pull the fly away from the fish. Again, wait until you feel the fish.

The crystal flash and the antennae are both optional on this fly, but are simple to tie in and add to the realism. Olive crystal chenille is usually used, but the foam can be white, tan or pink. The 2 mm craft foam is too light to hold up a hook and take the strain of repeated strikes, so use 3 mm foam (Hobby Lobby) or door hanger foam. Trim the foam into 3/8 inch strips by laying a ruler along the material and making several passes along the ruler with a single edge razor. The final trims for shaping can be made with sharp scissors.

Shrimp swim backwards, so that their eyes are at the back of the fly. There are many ways to create the unweighted eyes needed for this pattern. They can be bought at a fly store, or can be assembled from readily available materials. The common technique is to melt the tip of a heavy monofilament to form a ball at the end, then paint that ball black and coat it with epoxy or some other clear hard material. I sometime use a 10/0 black seed bead super-glued onto 30# monofilament. Here I am using bristles cut from a dollar store hair brush.

## Materials

**Hook:** 2x long Saltwater Hook, Size 4. Mustad 34011 (shown)

**Feelers:** White fox (shown), bucktail or calf hair

**Antennae:** Black Rubber leg material (shown), black flex floss

**Body:** Crystal Chenille, Olive, white, or to match overbody

**Thread:** White 3/0

**Accent:** Pearl Saltwater Crystal Flash

**Eyes:** Monofilament, Black beads, or Hair brush bristles

**Overbody:** 3 or 5 mm craft foam



**Step 1:** Attach the thread behind the eye and wrap back to the bend in the hook. This isn't required, but helps to create a more durable fly. Tie in a small bunch of the chosen hair at the bend of the hook. This should be about the length of the hook.



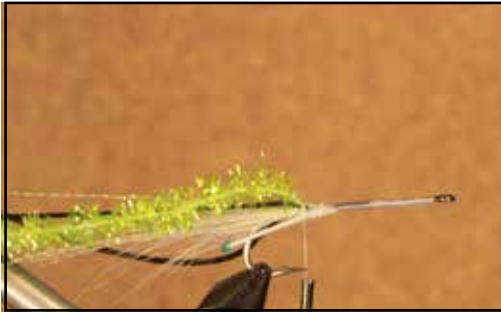
**Step 2:** Add some crystal flash highlights to the mouth parts. Take two full length strands of the flash, cut them in half to create four strands, then fold these four strands around the tying thread and slide them down to the tie in point for the feelers. Take a few wraps to hold them in place.



**Step 3:** (Optional) Tie in your antennae material at the back of the hook so that the black strands extend back over the feelers.



**Step 4:** Tie in your eyes so that they extend back from the bend of the hook. This is potentially the failure point for the fly, so add a drop of glue to the base of the eyes to solidify the connection.



**Step 5:** Pinch the end of your crystal chenille and pull off a small amount of the crystal material, exposing the base strand underneath. This will give you a more secure tie in point and reduce the bulk. Tie in the chenille at the very back of the hook shank and take a wrap.



**Step 6:** Using a razor blade and a ruler, slice a 3/8 inch strip of the foam at least as long as the total fly. Here I am using foam door hanger material (about 4 MM thick) but 3 mm craft foam will work as well. Trim one end of the strip to a double point about 3/8 inch long. Use your left hand to pinch the foam down around the hook and take several thread wraps at the back of the fly in the position shown. Thread can sometimes cut the foam, so take a couple of loose wraps first, followed by several tighter wraps. Move your thread under the foam to the eye of the fly.



**Step 7:** Wrap the crystal chenille to the front of the fly and tie it off just behind the eye. Trim off any excess material.



**Step 8:** Pull the foam forward and pinch it down at the eye. Take several wraps as before to hold the foam in place. Take several hal-hitches or whip finish the thread over the foam at the eye and trim off the thread. A drop of glue would help here.



**Step 9:** Cut off the foam about 1/4 inch ahead of the eye and trim it as shown.