

The Spoon Fly by Jack Lehman (AFF NL March 2009)

My first introduction to the spoon fly came from Captain Dean Thomas of Slow-ride Guide Service in Aransas Pass. Those of you who have used conventional tackle are all aware of how deadly a spoon can be for redfish as well as for many warm water species. When this fly was first introduced to fly fishing, it was a curiosity. But as more people used the spoon fly, stories of its effectiveness began to spread. As I came to appreciate this new addition and its contribution to fly fishing, it became important to learn to construct the spoon fly. My first attempts to tie it were clumsy at best, but I continued to tinker with the fly, improve my technique, and have come to a pretty good method for tying it.

The mylar I use comes from many places. One of the fly shops here is aware of our need and carries a small assortment of mylar sheets. We have also found some interesting sheets in fishing stores that are designed to add flash to lures. Most recently, we have found a source that carries larger sheets at a better price and has some very different colors and patterns –the scrapbook stores or sections in craft stores. Look for sheets that have a holographic mylar sheet with an adhesive back. The glues they use seem to stand up well in our field testing.

The first spoon flies I tied were hand cut and shaped by trial and error. I know I started by tracing a baby spoon, adding the tabs and then adjusting the size using a copier. Then one of my fly tying colleagues, Clint Jackson, used his blacksmith training to produce a handy cutter shown in the picture that many Austin fly tyers use for to cut the spoon pattern out of the mylar. He built cutters to form a spoon body sized for a #4 VMC 7105 hook. These hooks are difficult to find, but I've found that a Gamakatsu Split Shot/Drop Shot hook in #1/0 is virtually the same hook. The cutters should be available from Clint through the guide service he is associated with at www.hillcountryflyfishers.com. In addition to Clint's cutters, I have located a person who has access to a computer controlled laser cutter to knock out other sized versions of these bodies in large numbers. I will let you know when these spoon bodies become available.

The action of a spoon fly is best accomplished by using a curved hook. I started by bending the shank on Mustad 34011s and similar hooks, but came around to using hooks with factory curves. Two hooks that work well are identified above, but some tiers have had success using Gamakatsu Straight Eye Shiner hooks, kahle and shrimp hooks. In smaller sizes, we've found that scud hooks work well.

I normally tie this fly with the narrow part of the spoon at the front, but reversed works as well. Very small dumbbell eyes can be added at either end. Some tiers use oval bodies. Many tiers add a stick on eye to the back of the fly before the epoxy coating or use a hole punch to pierce the body as they feel this adds more vibration to the action of the fly.

The fly casts very well on an appropriately sized rod. Once in the water, it sinks slowly in a hook up orientation. When fished on a long leader and a floating fly line, the fly will rise in the water column on a slow strip, then flutter down on the pauses. This imitates wounded baitfish, and most strikes come on the fall. Stripped rapidly, it will flutter and whirl on each strip, with the attendant flashes attracting many aggressive strikes.

Materials

Hook: See the text (Gamakatsu Split Shot/Drop Shot #1/0)

Tail: Fox, Rabbit, Marabou, Krystal Flash or gold flashabou

Hook Wrap: (Optional) Diamond braid, sparkle Braid (shown)

Weed Guard: (Optional) 15-20 Lb mono

Thread: Mono thread, or to match body

Shellback: Mylar sticky back sheet

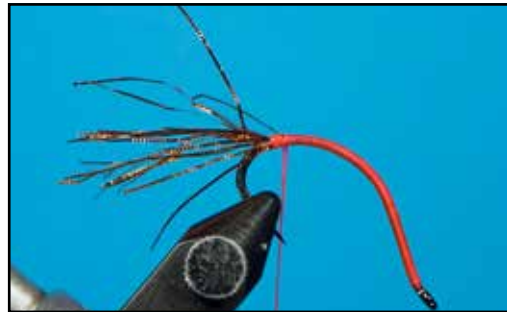
Glue: 5 minute or 30 minute two-part epoxy



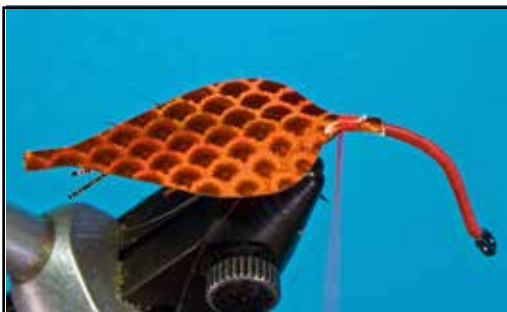
Step 1: A collection of the materials necessary for tying the fly. Clockwise from bottom left: Two sheets of sticky back mylar sheets in copper; 5 minute epoxy in delivery syringe; body cutter (optional); copper colored body braid; and hooks. Not shown - tailing material.



Step 2: Peel the backing from two sheets of sticky back mylar sheeting and carefully press the two sheets together. I've found it easiest to peel and fold a narrow piece of the backing from both sheets, align them and press them together, then continue to pull the backing away until the sheets are pressed together. Try to avoid any air bubbles between the sheets and press them out if you can. Shown here, are a variety of prepared bodies from several different sheets. With a cutter, place the mylar sheet over the supplied rubber base and press the cutter down onto the sheet, rocking it in all directions until the sheet is pierced. You still need to trim the tabs with scissors. If you do not have the cutter, you will need to cut the mylar body out completely by hand. Practice some with paper until you develop a shape and size that is workable for you. Be sure to add the tabs at both ends because this is how the body is attached to the hook.



Step 3: Start your thread at the eye and make a smooth wrap well back into the bend of the hook. The picture shows red thread for photographic purposes but I usually tie this fly with clear mono thread. Mono thread virtually disappears under an epoxy coating. Hold your body blank against the hook to determine where the back of the fly will be, and tie in your tailing material so that the tie-in point will be under the mylar. Notice the position of the hook in the vise. This makes it easier to work so deeply in the bend, and you can readjust the position as you need.



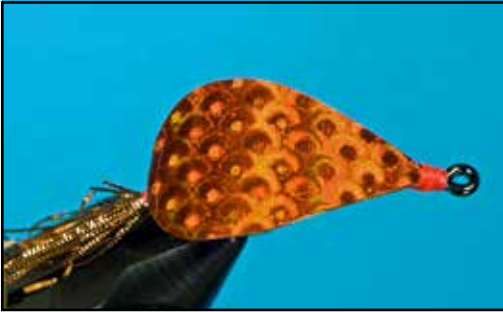
Step 4: Tie in the mylar body over the tailing material so that the body is pointing backward. Position the body so that when it is folding over the hook, the other tab is covering the hook just behind the eye. Take care that the body is straight and even so that a twist in the body isn't created when the front is tied in place.



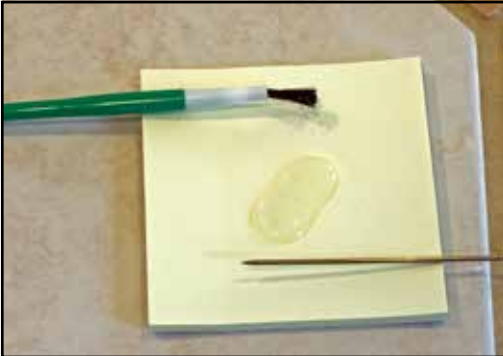
Step 5: If you intend to wrap the shank, tie in your material at the back of the body beside the body tie in point. Advance the thread to just behind the eye (adjust the hook in the vise if necessary) wrap the body braid to the front and tie it off. Trim any excess.



Step 6: Fold the body over the hook as tightly as you dare and tie it in by the tab just behind the eye. A little of the tab may need to be trimmed here. Look at the mylar body to be sure that it is balanced and even. Unwrap the thread wraps and adjust the body if necessary. Once you are satisfied, you can whip finish the head and trim off the excess thread.



Step 7: This is a view of the prepared body from above. The fly is ready for the finishing step.



Step 8: Shown are two dabs of epoxy ready to be mixed: One of resin and one of hardener. I am mixing the epoxy on a tablet of yellow memo paper. Use a metal bodkin or a toothpick to mix the epoxy parts together, try to avoid adding any bubbles. You can use a cheap brush, toothpick, or bodkin to apply the epoxy to the fly. I usually use a brush because it gives me better control of the amount of epoxy added and to obtain a thinner coat. Don't toss your leftover epoxy on the sheet just yet. Instead of checking the fly to see if the epoxy has cured, you can check whatever is left on the paper. Then just toss the paper and the brush out when you are satisfied.



Step 9: You can leave the fly locked in your vise, or you can hold it in your hand. Apply the epoxy in a nice even coat, including your thread wraps at the front and back of the fly. Make sure that you pay special attention to the edges of the mylar body. The fly's epoxy finish is much improved if you can continuously rotate the fly until the epoxy has cured. If you don't have access to an epoxy turner, place the fly back into the vise and use the rotary function of your vise to turn the fly until it has hardened.

Step 10: This is a picture of another variation of the fly using a vinyl backed sheet covered with glitter. This material is much heavier than the mylar, and when covered with a heavier coating of the epoxy, will sink faster and deeper than the mylar version. This fly also illustrates the addition of a mono weed guard. As you are creating the thread wrap on the hook, add a length of mono material under the thread, and wrap it against the hook a little farther along the bend. Return the thread back to the tie in point for the tailing material. Once you have tied in the mylar body at the front, tie in the mono at the front as well. Adjust the length of the mono so that it is just outside of the hook point. Cut off the mono about 3/8 inch above the hook eye, take a match or lighter and create a ball at the end of the mono. Once cooled, pull on the mono by the hook point to bring the ball against the eye, whip finish and cut off the tying thread

