

Phil's Flybox

By Phil Rowley

The Frostbite Bloodworm

Most anglers are aware of dietary staples in the diets of trout and char in productive stillwaters such as those of the South central interior of British Columbia. Dragons, damsels leeches and scuds all pop into the forefront. But there is one quiet, consistent stillwater staple few anglers consider, chironomid larvae or bloodworms. Easily the most important item on the menu of trout, chironomids offer year round fly fishing opportunities.

The majority of bloodworms spend their time living in tube homes they construct along the bottom of the lake, venturing out only to feed or move residences. Many species are able to generate hemoglobin that gives the larva the ability to survive in oxygen deficient waters. The red coloration of the hemoglobin lead to the larva's common nickname, bloodworm. But don't be limited by the color red, I have seen larvae that are maroon, green, olive and even candy cane combinations of red and green too. As a general guideline the clearer the water the brighter the bloodworm. Mud-bottom lakes such as Tunkwa and Leighton are known for their large maroon and candy cane colored bloodworms, while those from clear marl lakes such as White or Peterhope tend to be a bright crimson. Feeble swimmers, chironomid larvae move through the water column using a vigorous lashing motion coupled with rests in an extended position. Although this action seems animated, very little if any forward progress is made. Floating lines coupled with long, fifteen foot plus leaders are my favorite tactic. Depending upon the depth of the water it may take 3 minutes or longer for the fly to reach the ideal fishing depth, just above the bottom. Chironomid larvae go through two seasonal migrations. In the spring the larvae move from the deeper water into the shallower reaches in preparation for pupation and emergence. The reverse occurs in the fall as the larvae prepare for the oncoming winter, making early spring and late fall peak times to probe the waters with larval patterns. Low light conditions such as morning and early evening are other prime times to consider. Under the security of the reduced light bloodworms leave the security of their tube homes to forage and move about. I often begin my day diligently working or wind drifting a bloodworm pattern until the hatches of the day get into full swing, its not unheard of to stick with the larval pattern all day long.

The basis of the Frostbite Bloodworm is simplicity. Like the larva itself, this pattern does not inspire angler confidence. Using other spartan patterns as a guide I devised a pattern consisting of a small V tail, bright red body and fine wire rib and only recently did the tail become a regular feature to imitate the distinct posterior pro-legs of the larva. My original concept consisted of a body of Frostbite counter wound with fine copper or silver wire. The anorexic nature of this pattern helps improve its sink rate too. To accelerate the sink rate even further try a small tungsten bead or underbody of fine wire. When forming the wire under body, wind the wire down the hook shank making sure to leave enough to form the rib. Do not counter wind the rib as this serves to unravel the underbody, instead wind the rib using the traditional over the top technique. My favorite sizes range from #10 through #16, with a size twelve being my most consistent producer. Mix and match the various Frostbite colors to create the different banded effects that are common to many species. My favorites include red, maroon, olive and green.

Bloodworm patterns do little for anglers not familiar with their guile as most prefer to grab a robust dragon or animated leech pattern instead. Believe me at first I was skeptical too, after all, casting a tiny red or green stick into the vast expanse of a lake seemed crazy. But as my knowledge and experience grew, so did my confidence in these slender designs. So the next time choosing the right pattern seems a bit unsure, tie on a bloodworm pattern, such as my Frostbite Bloodworm. Be sure to wait patiently for it to sink to the right depth, creep it back at a snail's pace. Chances are any trout in the area will be happy to make a meal of it.

THE FROSTBITE BLOODWORM

Hook:	Tiemco 5262 #10-#16
Thread:	Color to Match Frostbite
Tail:	Super Floss split into a V using a Dubbing needle
Rib:	Fine Copper, Gold or Silver Wire
Body:	Frostbite

TYING INSTRUCTIONS

Step 1

Cover the hook shank with tying thread. Return the tying thread to the head of the fly once a smooth foundation has been created.



Step 2

Take a strand of Super Floss and using a sharp dubbing needle pierce the Super Floss about a quarter of an inch from the end. Pull the Super Floss so the needle splits it neatly down the middle. Don't worry if the split isn't right down the middle. The finished result should be a length of Super Floss with a small V in one end.



Step 3

Pre-trim the Super Floss so it is about 1-½ inches long with the V in one end. Tie in the Super Floss at the head of the hook so the split end trails out behind the hook. Lift up slightly on the Super Floss and apply tension to keep the material righted on top of the hook shank while securing the Super Floss down the hook shank. With the Super Floss firmly in place grasp the ends of the V and pull them away from each other so the split travels down the remaining length to the hook bend. Trim the tail about even with the hook bend.



Step 4

Cut a one-inch length of Frostbite. Grasp both ends and pull. The Frostbite should unravel into one long length. Usually a couple of knots remain as the end strands break down into two individual strands that appear as one. This is exactly what we want to have happen as the knots help to control the material. Moistening the two strands helps keep them together.



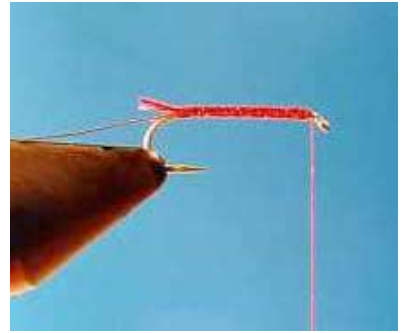
Step 5

Tie in the wire rib along the near side of the hook, to help counter winding the rib later on. Advance the tying thread to the head of the hook and tie in the prepared length of Frostbite. Use only enough wraps to secure the Frostbite in place. The tying thread should remain at the head area.



Step 6

Wind the Frostbite down the hook shank to the tail and back over itself back to the tying thread hanging at the hook eye. Over wrapping the material with itself forms a durable even body.



Step 7

Counter-wind the rib over the body using evenly spaced wraps. Tie off the rib with the tying thread. Place your thumbnail on the joint where the rib was tied off. Grasp the rib with your other hand and use a pulling and twisting motion to break the rib off. This method avoids having to deal with that annoying tag of leftover rib material that loves to break thread. Build up a slightly oversized thread head and whip finish the fly. Trim the tying thread and apply a coat of Angler's Choice Soft body or Sally Hansen's Hard as Nails nail polish for additional toughness and shine.



Step 8

The completed Frostbite Bloodworm viewed from the top.



**Got a favorite pattern you would like to share with fellow club members? Please let me know and I will feature it in a future issue. -
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