

# *Phil's Flybox*

By Phil Rowley

## MLF Epoxy Fry

Armed with a variety of nymphs, streamers and fry patterns, small legions of persistent fly fishers ply the back sloughs of rivers such as the Fraser, small intimate streams, coastal lakes and the numerous gravel lined shorelines dotting the coast in search of the elusive Cutthroat trout. By far the most popular and successful types of flies are those that mimic small baitfish such as chub fry, sticklebacks, sculpins and salmon fry that Cutthroat seem to fancy. It seems every angler and fly tyer has his or her own cast of favorites.

Shawn and Lise Bennett are famous for their unique selection of salt-water fly patterns. Their ability to manipulate epoxy is without equal. Shawn and Lise are aware of so many subtle nuances regarding epoxy that other tyers don't consider or are even aware of. Every time Shawn and I get together, I come away with a new tidbit of technique or information. There is hope yet that I won't permanently affix myself to the tying bench. Dedicated to creating the finest saltwater flies while using and promoting the best materials, Shawn and Lise founded Moonlight Flies. Recognized as salt-water fly fishing pioneers of sorts for Pacific salmon Shawn and Lise have been fortunate enough to turn their passion into full time employment as guides for Weigh West Marine Resort. Located in small hamlet of Tofino along Vancouver Island's west coast, Weigh West is the destination for northwest salt-water fly-fishing. Throughout the season Shawn and Lise call Tofino home, during the off season they travel on behalf of Weigh West promoting salt water fly fishing through a variety of shows, exhibitions and seminars.

Avid cutthroaters as well, Shawn and Lise have perfected a number of successful patterns for these nomadic British Columbia natives. Without a doubt, their most successful creation is the MLF (short for Moonlight Flies) Epoxy Fry. Long inspired by the translucent fishy qualities of pearlescent mylar, Shawn and Lise made this material the focal point of their Epoxy Fry. But the real key to this pattern is the creative underbody that helps radiate many of the subtle hues and colours common to so many baitfishes. At first, Shawn and Lise used the dyed core of the small pearlescent tubing that forms the body. Using

either permanent markers or Venaird's dye, Shawn and Lise experimented with a variety of colours. After seven years of experimentation, they settled upon a combination of burgundy or pink, royal blue and a washed out yellow. Tyers can still dye the tubing core but Shawn and Lise now use embroidery thread as their primary material. Shawn begins construction of the underbody colours by using an initial foundation of burgundy or pink embroidery thread or Super Floss. To add additional flare, pink, green and blue Flashabou are thrown into the mix, forming a colourful tail. With the underbody and tail complete, Shawn slides a length of small pearlescent tubing over top securing it firmly in place, fore and aft to create a slim dart like appearance. After applying a pair of small 1.5mm silver prismatic eyes, Shawn applies a thin single coat of Devcon 2 Ton clear epoxy to provide a protective coat while at the same time serving as a catalyst to accent the multi-coloured underbody. Avoid using 5-minute epoxy as it dries too fast. The epoxy must penetrate the body of the fly to complete the illusion and is best applied at room temperature and dried slowly on a rotating rack. The end result is a slim realistic fly that shimmers a virtual rainbow of colours from any angle.

Shawn prefers to use one of the clear intermediate lines available through Airflo, Scientific Anglers or Cortland to fish the MLF Epoxy Fry. Using short, brisk strips Shawn darts the pattern in a terrified fashion. It is a consistent producer on the many cutthroat beaches Shawn and Lise frequent around Vancouver Island. Lise has also done quite well using this pattern for early season Coho. The MLF Epoxy Fry's generic look makes for a plausible needlefish imitation. Shawn recounted a tale of early season success last year sight fishing for juvenile Coho, more commonly called bluebacks. The ravaging horde of bluebacks were gorging themselves silly on immature needlefish and didn't hesitate for a moment when Shawn dropped his MLF Epoxy Fry in front of their noses, snapping it up in seconds.



## MLF Epoxy Fry

|            |   |
|------------|---|
| Hook:      | Tiemco 9394 or Mustad 34001 #6  |
| Thread:    | clear mono  |
| Tail:      | pink and green Flashabou  |
| Underbody: | Initial foundation - pink or burgundy embroidery thread<br>or Super Floss<br>Ventral side - washed out yellow embroidery thread.<br>Dorsal side – royal blue embroidery thread topped with<br>two strands of blue Flashabou |
| Overbody:  | small pearlescent mylar coated with 2 Ton Devcon clear epoxy  |
| Eyes:      | 1.5mm Prismatic Silver Stick on Eyes  |

### TYING INSTRUCTIONS

#### Step 1

Cover the hook shank with tying thread. Mono tying thread can be slippery stuff, a couple of half hitches helps provide additional security. Secure in a tail comprising of green and pink Flashabou. Trim the tail so it is about half the hook shank in length.



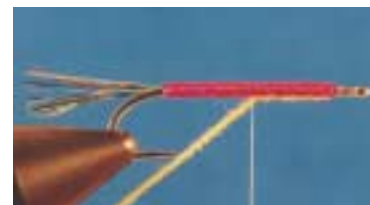
#### Step 2

Tie in a length of burgundy or pink embroidery thread or Super Floss to form the initial underbody. Wind the initial underbody foundation material forward to the eye. Tie off and trim the excess. The goal is to produce a finished underbody that is tapered from top to bottom but flat along the sides.



#### Step 3

Beginning with the ventral side of the underbody double a single strand of washed out yellow embroidery thread around the tying thread. Slide it into position at the head of the fly along the underside of the hook shank. Secure the doubled embroidery thread down the hook shank to the tail.



#### Step 4

Trim one of the strands of embroidery thread at the rear of the hook. Pull the remaining strand back along the ventral side of the hook and secure in position to the hook eye. The idea is to stack the material in a triangular fashion.



#### Step 5

Repeat the same process as outlined in steps #3 and #4 for the dorsal portion of the underbody.



### Step 6

With the tying thread at the front of the hook double a single strand of blue Flashabou around the tying thread. Slide the Flashabou into position on top of the hook and secure it down the back of the fly to the tail. Trim the remaining Flashabou even with the tail. Advance the tying thread forwards to the hook eye, whip finish and remove.



### Step 7

Remove the core from a length of small pearlescent Mylar tubing. Slide the tubing onto the hook. Reattach the tying thread and tie the Mylar tubing down at the hook eye. Make two complete encompassing wraps around the tubing prior to tightening the tying thread to avoid the tubing from rolling around the hook. Trim any errant tubing strands then build a neat head, whip finish and remove the tying thread.



### Step 8

Pull the pearlescent tubing tight along the fly. Still holding the tubing in place reattach the clear mono thread at the rear of the hook shank. Be sure to make a few extra wraps to ensure that the pearlescent tubing is firmly in place. Whip finish the fly at the rear of the hook and trim the tying thread.



### Step 9

Using a dubbing needle, apply a pair of prismatic silver stick on eyes. Press them firmly into position.



### Step 10

Using a spreader fashioned out of thin cardboard apply a thin coating of 2 ton epoxy all over the fly. Be sure to coat the thread wrappings at the front and rear of the hook. Allow the epoxy to penetrate the pearlescent tubing. Place the finished pattern on a rotating tying rack so the epoxy dries in a uniform fashion.



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