

Phil's Flybox

By Phil Rowley

The Damsel Leech Thing

It was late fall, foraging trout were tight to shore, stuffing themselves in anticipation of the up coming winter. Reflecting upon his 30 plus years of fly-fishing the interior lakes good friend and guide Gord Honey knew this spot well. We anchored so close to shore there was barely enough water to float the boat. About thirty feet in front of us lay a shallow trench, a trout highway of sorts. Through this gateway, pods of trout patrolled the rich shoreline weed beds in search of scuds, immature damsels, leeches and dragons. Everything was on the menu.

Rigging up our dry lines we lengthened our leaders to fifteen feet. Since the onset of frost the water had cleared up considerably. The fall clarity coupled with shallow water made for spooky fish. Gord knotted on his new fall favorite, a Damsel Leech Thing or DLT for short. Without effort Gord fired his line out almost to the backing knot. Allowing it to sink for a brief second he began an almost chironomid paced hand twist retrieve. Under the slight breeze a slight bow formed about half way up his fly line. Two thirds of the way through his retrieve the bow straightened. Gord recognized the cause immediately and lifted his rod to set the hook. The water erupted and things became interesting as the trout bolted left and right in search of deep water, debris or weeds using all of its instincts in an attempt to throw the fly. Gord was equal to the task and soon we had the trout resting beside the boat. She was a magnificent polished chrome and we estimated her to be at least seven pounds. Gord repeated this scene a number of times including a number of fish on the drop as the fly settled after a cast. After an hour of this abuse I couldn't take it any longer, I stripped my line in and tied on my own DLT.

Over the past years, Gord has noticed that during the fall months trout feed heavily on immature damsels and leeches. Based upon his observations he began searching for a simple design. After a short time Gord put two and two together and combined this trout fetish into one pattern, the Damsel Leech Thing. Wanting to keep the overall pattern size small, a #10 2XL hook such as the Mustad 9671 or Tiemco 5262 served as the foundation. After sliding a small gold bead onto the hook Gord added a tail of dark olive marabou mixed with a few strands of gold Flashabou for added shimmer. A blend of equal parts of golden olive and peacock Simi Seal formed the brushed out dubbed body. To muddy the pattern slightly Gord tossed in a pinch of medium brown dubbing. Instead of using a traditional thread dubbing loop Gord substituted a loop of fine copper wire. Happy with his concept Gord took the body a step further by making his own dubbing brushes using a dubbing machine he fashioned out of an electric drill. Making wire-dubbing brushes makes sense not only from a durability perspective but from one of tying speed too. Recently Roots Fly Tying Products have begun marketing their own dubbing machine that spins dubbing brushes out at an alarming rate. The possibilities of this machine are endless and I encourage any tyer to give their machine serious consideration. I have had so much fun with my own machine that at times tying a fly seemed secondary.

In addition to the floating line and long leader combination Gord has started using a 5-7 foot section of clear intermediate sinking leader looped to the end of his floating line. These leaders are available through Airflo or Rio. To the end of the intermediate leader Gord adds 5 feet of tippet. This set up sinks at a perfect rate and casts like a dream. No matter what the set up, the retrieve is the same, a creepy crawly hand twist. Takes can be subtle or savage. It just depends upon the mood of the fish.

The DLT is a fly for all seasons but steps up to the plate during the cool crisp days of fall. On so many of our interior lakes damsels and or leeches are a preferred food source. The DLT is a simple durable design created with this preference in mind.

THE DAMSEL LEECH THING

Hook:	Tiemco 5262 or Mustad 9671 #10-14
Thread:	Brown or Olive 8/0
Tail:	Dark Olive Marabou and Gold Flashabou
Body:	Mixture of Golden Olive, Peacock and Brown Simi Seal Twisted in a Loop of Fine Copper Wire
Head:	Small Gold Bead

TYING INSTRUCTIONS

Step 1

Debarb the hook and slide on a small gold bead up to the eye. Place the hook into the vise and attach the thread at the rear of the bead. Cover the shank with tying thread to provide a solid base for the balance of the fly.



Step 2

Tie in a sparse clump of dark olive marabou. The finished tail should be about shank length. I prefer to measure my tails to length as opposed to tearing. This keeps the natural swaying motion of the marabou tips intact. With the marabou in place double two strands of gold Flashabou around the tying thread. Slide the Flashabou up the tying thread and onto the hook shank. Secure the Flashabou down the shank to the base of the tail. Trim the Flashabou slightly longer than the marabou to help prevent the tail from fouling.



Step 3

Prepare a second marabou clump in the same manner as the first. Tie this clump in place along the hook shank sandwiching the Flashabou between the two bunches of marabou. Return the tying thread to the rear of the bead.



Step 4

Take a long length of fine copper wire and double it end to end. Secure the ends of the wire in place, beginning at the rear of the bead. Secure the wire down the hook shank to form a long loop. Return the thread to the bead once again.



Step 5

Slide the dubbing mix into the wire loop and twist it tight. A pair of electrician's pliers works well.

**Step 6**

Wind the "dubbing brush" forwards to form the body. Sweep the dubbing fibers rearwards with each wrap. Tie off the dubbing brush behind the bead and trim any excess. Whip finish and apply head cement. To provide a finishing touch use a Velcro comb to roughen the body flowing the fibers back along the fly in the process.



This is the Roots dubbing machine. It is the perfect tool for mass-producing dubbing brushes and other wire reinforced fly tying materials.



**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. - Phil at
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