

The Osprey Flybox

“The Dazzle Caddis Emerger”

by Doug Wright

This month Doug Wright shares with us a fly he first tied one day at Forest Lake while on our annual 3 week family camping trip. Later in our trip he was able to try it out at a hike in lake in the 100 Mile House area. We'd taken our float tubes in and kicked over to the weedbeds opposite where we launched and while I was concentrating on fishing chironomids (what else?), Doug put on one of his Dazzle Caddis Emergers and cast it in amongst the lily pads where the fish were actively feeding on the sedges which were hatching. On his first cast his creation was devoured and he went on to outfish me (again) quite easily that day, I did manage to catch the biggest fish of the day though, right Doug? – Will Wright

As summer strolls its way into mid June through July, anglers can expect to hit the exciting caddis (sedge) emergence. Imitating the pupa stage during a hatch can be very effective if you have an idea of the zone where the fish are feeding, but many fly anglers especially enjoy fishing patterns imitating the moth-like winged adults. This offers an exhilarating fishery, allowing the fly fisher to “see” everything. Being able to see your buoyant offering viciously attacked by a splashing trout of any size is what fly fishers come to really enjoy. Still, the “match the hatch” principle must be followed for greater success when using surface flies; it's no different than fishing subsurface imitations. Careful observation can reveal the answer. Often, it looks as if trout are feeding on an adult stillwater insect when actually, they are gorging on emerging insects just under the surface or those stuck in the surface film. This happens quite regularly during the popular caddis hatch. The ascended pupa sits within the surface film and begins its process of slowly climbing out of the pupal skin, and while doing so is an easy meal for a hungry trout. Armed with a few good emerger patterns added to your caddis box you are prepared to tackle a caddis hatch and the opportunistic emerger stage. My favorite fly pattern to imitate the medium-sized Limnephilidae and the large Phryganeidae (Traveler) families of sedges during the stage of emergence is the Dazzle Caddis Emerger.

It has always surprised me how few lake fishermen carry emerger flies in their boxes. Many stream fishermen are familiar with these patterns, but many stillwater fishers seldom resort to them. In a lake there is virtually no current, unless there is a breeze which only creates a slight flow, so the trout can carefully inspect your imitation with all the time in the world and either accept or refuse, whereas trout in a stream, depending on the current speed, have to decide whether to take a pattern in a matter of seconds. Many stream fishers value and have good success with emergers, so a lake angler should definitely have a few as well. Trout often become selective, and if they're feeding on emerging insects, you're going to want to be fishing an emerger pattern if you want to catch fish.

Anyways, I had a few emerging sedge imitations in my fly box, but nothing I was really happy with. After watching fish gorging themselves on sedge emergers, with limited luck on my part, I was off to the tying bench. The end result was the Dazzle Caddis Emerger. First off, I tied the tail to simulate the shuck using dubbing material. I like to use Dazzle Dubbing or Arizona Semi Seal or Angler's Choice Mohair Plus in appropriate colours. Materials like this represent the casing well. They have the “residual colour” of the caddis shuck and a little shim and shine with the addition of translucency when the sun's rays shine onto the finished fly. Other shuck materials to be used are Z-Lon, Antron, and the like, but remember, when tying in the tail, don't use too much material or you won't have the same translucent effect. I added a thick deer hair wing and some wing pads of lacquered goose quills for a touch of realism. Purchased from a craft store the wing case is made of a cut strip of brown sheet foam which aids in the fly's buoyancy. I got this idea after seeing Phil Rowley's Emergent Crystal Sedge Pupa. A few of my fly's other characteristics also come from this pattern of Phil's. A broad and scruffy thorax made of Arizona Synthetic Peacock dubbing or any preferred material represents the legs and the insect pushing itself forward within the pupal skin to begin hatching. The legs (or more specifically, the swimmerets) are made using peasant rump or hen pheasant fibers, with the antennae tied in using the same materials or wood duck mallard flank. The fly does a good job posing as the emerging caddis and looks like a caddis which has just begun to hatch with the wings projecting outwards, or a caddis resting upon its casing and drying its delicate wings.

My favorite method of fishing this pattern is to cast out the fly a good long distance to a sighted, rising fish. Keeping the line tight, let the fly just sit there, giving it a sharp, six inch pull on a regular occasion. This mimics the

newly hatched adults instead of the emergers, I've had good luck fishing this pattern as an adult, skittering it across the surface using short, quick, one inch pulls.

Tying this pattern is fun and isn't a hard task; it is a little more time consuming than some other caddis emerger imitations but in my opinion, it's well worth it.

TYING INSTRUCTIONS

MATERIALS

- Hook:** 3 extra long curved nymph/dry fly hook, such as Mustad C53S or Tiemco 200R (sizes 10 - 14)
Thread: 8/0 Brown or Olive
Tail/Shuck: Dazzle Dubbing, Arizona Semi Seal or Angler's Choice Mohair Plus, colour to match
Abdomen: Same as Tail
Wing: Deer or Elk Hair
Wing Pads: Lacquered Goose Quill, Trimmed to Shape
Wing Case: 5/32" Strip of Brown Sheet Foam
Thorax: Seal, Arizona Synthetic Peacock, or a scruffy dubbing of choice, colour to match
Swimmerets: Pheasant Rump or Hen Pheasant Fibers, 3-5 on each side
Antennae: 2 Fibers of Pheasant Rump, Hen Pheasant, or Wood Duck Mallard Flank

Step 1

De-Barb the hook, start your thread and wrap shank. Tie in the tail material right above where the barb point would be. Remember, don't use too much material or you'll lose the translucent effect. Dub half of the shank with the same material used for the tail.



Step 2

Prepare and stack a clump of deer or elk hair and tie in where the body ends. As you can see in the photo I like to use a large amount. Don't worry about using too much and the thorax area becoming too fat; you want a broad thorax anyway. The wing should extend no further than half the tail.



Step 3

Take a prepared goose quill section. Trim an angle into the end it and secure the pad to the near side of the hook, along the body. It should look similar to the one in the picture. Tie another in the same way on the opposing side of the hook.



Step 4

Where the wing and goose quill sections are tied in, secure a strip of 5/32" brown sheet foam.



Step 5

Dub a scruffy thorax leaving a little room behind the eye. In this example I used an amber coloured dubbing (*the under fur from Shelby, our golden retriever*) and blended it with highlights of pearl Angel Hair. You can use whatever dubbing you want. A thick thorax is alright; we are imitating a caddis which is about to or has begun to hatch. The insect pushes itself forward within the pupal shuck as it is hatching, remember.



Step 6

Tie in a pair of swimmerets on either side of the hook using pheasant rump or hen pheasant fibers. Three to five strands on each side is ideal.



Step 7

Fold the strip of brown sheet foam over the thorax. Do not pull. Pulling the foam too tightly will decrease the needed buoyancy. Secure with tight wraps.



Step 8

Select two fibers off of a pheasant rump, hen pheasant, or wood duck mallard feather for the antennae. Tie in where the wing case is tied down. Add a good drop of lacquer to increase the security of the antennae. Lift the tag end of the foam strip, build a neat head and whipfinish. Trim the foam slightly over the eye in the same fashion as the Mikulak Sedge or Elk Hair Caddis to form a neat, small head. Apply a coat of head cement or Brushable Loctite Super Glue around the head in all areas where thread can be seen for added durability.



The Dazzle Caddis Emerger is a versatile pattern. Tie them in different colours for greater flexibility. Left to right: green (the same as in the step-by-step photos); a darker variation using Arizona Semi Seal No. 25 Canadian Olive for the shuck and Arizona Synthetic Peacock for the thorax; an olive variation with a brown saddle dry fly hackle; a green variation with a green twisted extended shuck using small green crystal chenille and Gudebrod EZ-Dub.