

Phil's Flybox

By Phil Rowley

The Epoxy Minnow

As wandering Cutthroat gorge themselves on stickleback, chub, or salmon fry lower mainland fly fishers flock to the sloughs and rivers throughout the eastern Fraser Valley in pursuit. Cutthroat are noted for their love of fish in their diet so minnow and streamer patterns figure prominently in the ardent cutthroat fly anglers fly box. Lakes containing cutthroat are worthy of a visit too. Working in teams, cutthroat herd their prey much like ocean going salmon slashing through herring balls. Just about any fly cast into this melee draws a response.

The numerous variations of the venerable Tied Down Minnow are one of the most popular cutthroat pattern styles. This sleek design does a superb job of mimicking the slender pin like look of so many small forage fish. The only failing of this pattern is its durability. After a couple of good chewings the namesake tied down back of the fly becomes tattered and pulled. The angler either retires the fly or pulls the back loose turning the pattern into a traditional streamer. With the explosion of saltwater fly designs incorporating epoxy it was only a matter of time until these concepts spread to freshwater tying. To some this is old news as many anglers have been using epoxy for years and they might wonder what took everyone else so long. At first glance I wondered what was the difference between some of the epoxy creations I saw and a Rapala lure. They looked the same with the exception of the treble hook garnish. Over time I accepted this epoxy invasion as the bright appearance and overall durability became too much to overlook. Epoxy now reaches all corners of my fly box from chironomid to water boatman patterns. A little dab of epoxy on a wingcase provides pre emergent glitter and a ton of durability.

For the Epoxy Minnow I start by tying a tuft of marabou to provide the pulsing action of a minnow's tail, while silver diamond braid makes for a quick and easy body. To imitate the gills of a wounded forage fish use a couple of wraps of red rabbit fur dubbing. Rabbit fur is user friendly and fits in with the slim design of this pattern. For the back the variegated look of mallard flank either natural or dyed realistically imitates a wide spectrum of forage fish. To add a little flash and sparkle I mix in a few strands of matching Angel Hair for good measure. Tie down the mallard flank and Angel Hair both front and rear. Build up a large white thread head to simulate the head of a baitfish followed by a couple of stick on eyes. Cover the entire fly except for the tail with a few liberal coats of epoxy. A drying rack using a rotisserie motor keeps the drying flies in constant rotation so the epoxy hardens in a uniform manner. The alternative is to use a fast drying epoxy and spinning the fly by hand until dry.

On the majority of rivers and sloughs I use a floating line 90% of the time. The floating line allows for a smooth, quick pickup to chase rising fish. It also keeps the fly up in the water column so the cutthroat can vault up from below to strike the fly. In the deeper reaches of some sloughs and lakes I switch to a sinking line of appropriate density from an intermediate to type 3 or 4 Uniform Sink. Keep a feel for soft takes too, sometimes cutthroat gently mouth the fly as if to sample before swallowing. Keep the retrieve varied from a quick darting panic-stricken pace to one of casual meandering. In moving waters I try to mend and manipulate the fly so it swims broadside and down stream as the current makes it impossible for any forage fish to head upstream. This presentation offers a broad, visible silhouette for the trout to hone in on as well.

EPOXY MINNOW

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| Hook: | Tiemco 5263 #8-#12 |
| Thread: | White 6/0 |
| Tail: | Marabou to match Shellback |
| Body: | Silver Diamond Braid |
| Shellback: | Mallard, Either Natural or Dyed and a few Strands of matching Angel Hair |
| Head: | White Tying Thread |
| Eyes: | Stick on Eyes |

TYING INSTRUCTIONS

Step 1

Cover the middle of the hook shank with lead wire substitute if desired, attach the tying thread and lock the lead wire substitute in place. Be sure to build up a smooth foundation.



Step 2

Tie in a length of marabou. Tear the tips so the tail is no longer than half the shank. With the tail complete wind a body of silver Diamond Braid. End the body a good two eye widths back from the hook eye.



Step 3

Dub the gills keeping them slender, two to three wraps is ample.



Step 4

Secure in the mallard flank followed by a few strands of Angel Hair for the shellback. The tips of the mallard flank should match the tips of the tail.



Step 5

Build up a neat balanced thread head. Keep the over all minnow profile of the pattern in mind. With the head complete whip finish and reattach the tying thread at the rear of the hook. Stroke the mallard and Angel Hair together so the Angel Hair rides on top of the mallard. Tie down the shellback at the rear of the hook, whip finish and trim the Angel Hair even with the tail.



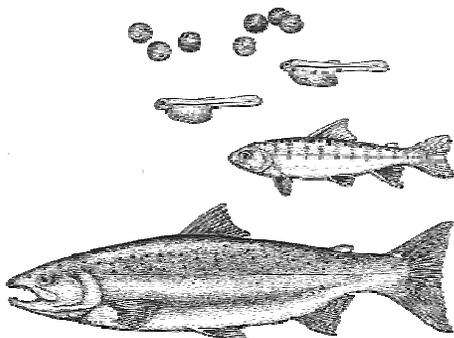
Step 6

Take the stick on eyes and try to place a fold right down the middle of the eye while it is still attached to the backing sheet. This cups the eye giving it a rounded profile making it easier to attach to the thread head. With the eyes in place cover the entire head and body with epoxy. Pay special attention to the rear tie down point and the head and eye areas. Make sure the coverage is uniform and there are no lumps or bumps to the pattern.

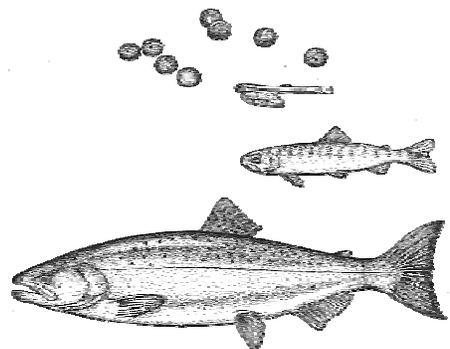


Got a favorite pattern you would like to share with fellow club members? Please let me know and I will feature it in a future issue. - Phil at flycraft@uniserve.com

“Life of Coho”



“Life of Chinook”



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