

# On The Fly

January 2006

“Fly tying is a school from which we never graduate”

## PATTERN OF THE MONTH-X-Caddis

Hook: Standard dry fly, sizes 12-20.  
Thread: 6/0 or 8/0 to match body.  
Tail: Zelon: amber gold or caddis gold.  
Body: Dubbed Antron: tan, brown, olive, or black to match natural.  
Wing: Deer or Elk hair.  
Head: Tying thread.



### Tying Instructions:

- 1) Start the thread near the bend of the hook and wind the thread forward to within two eye-widths of the eye.
- 2) Separate out a small quantity of Zelon. Use about half the normal amount (the material will be doubled onto itself). Cut it about three-shank-lengths long for easy handling. Secure it with thread wraps where the thread was left hanging. Twist the material one turn clockwise, and while holding the twisted material, fold it back onto itself forming a loop (the bubble shuck) a little less than a shank-length long; secure the loop with thread wraps and trim excess material.
- 3) Twist the loop tightly clockwise, and while holding the twisted loop, wind the thread toward the bend securing the loop to the top side of the hook. Stop the thread at the bend.
- 4) Dub the thread and form a body by winding the thread forward to the thread marker.
- 5) Lay down a thread base for the wing area on the remaining bare hook shank.
- 6) Select a portion of Deer or Elk hair and place it on top of hook with tips even with the body length. Secure the wing with each wrap placed to the rear of the first wrap. Release the thread tension slightly as you wind rearward to prevent over flaring and to make the hair lay down along the body.
- 7) Pick up the butts and put 3-4 wraps of whip finish tightly against the wing.
- 8) Trim the butts leaving a small stub.
- 9) Apply cement to insure that the wing stays in place.

The X-Caddis was originated in 1980 by Craig Mathews of Blue Ribbon Flies in West Yellowstone, Montana. Early versions were dubbed with beaver bodies but now most tiers use Antron because of its buggier appearance. This three-season pattern will take fish during the day when there is no hatch, during a hatch, and during the evening rise. It is fished most often drag free using a floating line. Some anglers put floatant only on the wing to imitate a cripple hanging in the surface.

The Zelon shuck represents the sheath that protected the insect as it moved upward to hatch. The emerging caddis leaves behind the shuck that is nearly transparent so the tail should be very sparse. Too much material will make the shuck stiff and opaque. On the original pattern the tail was cut to length straight and blunt. The pattern above incorporates an improved tail called the bubble shuck, giving a more natural elongated bubble appearance. It's a simple tie using only three materials. Tie some up for the next season, give them a test flight and let me know how they work.

### TYING TIPS - Loose Wings

Many tiers have been frustrated with their elk or deer hair caddis wings. After only a few fish, the wing comes loose or twists around the hook shank. The problem is that thread wrapped simply over the hair butts is not adequate to hold the wing in place. There is a solution, but it is not placing 29 more wraps of thread around the hair. The solution is placement of thread to apply the most force.

A flat thread base made with untwisted thread is needed at the wing location. When you mount the wing you should secure it directly on top of these forward-most flat wraps with a few wraps of well-twisted thread. The base thread on the hook acts as a friction or anchor point for the wing. By twisting the thread to bind the wing down you add strength and reduce the diameter, so it bites deeper into the wing, thus pinching the hair onto the base thread tighter.