

On The Fly

July 2006

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

PATTERN OF THE MONTH: Letort Hopper

Hook: 2X long, sizes 8-14, Mustad #94831 or equal.
Thread: Yellow or tan 3/0.
Body: Yellowish-tan fur dubbing.
Under wing: Brown-mottled turkey wing quill section.
Over wing: Natural deer body hair.
Head: Hair from wing butts trimmed.



Tying Instructions:

- 1) Start the thread one eye length behind the eye. This is your marker for the wing tie-in point. Wind a thread base back to the bend of the hook.
- 2) Dub a fur body forward to the tie-in point.
- 3) Prepare a 5/16" section of turkey tail feather by trimming the end to a right angle and rounding the corners slightly.
- 4) Tie in the feather section on top of the hook so it lies flat along the body, reaching to just past the end of it. Trim off the surplus feather in front.
- 5) Cut a small bunch of deer hair that is about 2" long. Comb out the fuzz and short hairs and align the tips in a stacker. Hold the hair on top of the hook with the tips reaching to the hook bend. Hold the hair firmly at the tie-in spot and cut the hair so that only 1/2" of the hair butts extend out in front of your fingers. Take two loose turns of thread around the hair and pull it tight so that the butt ends flair but the hair between your fingers stays on top, unflared. Spiral some tight turns of thread through the butts taking care not to wind down any hair. Whip-finish the thread in front of the butts and cut the thread.
- 6) Trim the butts flat on the bottom, close to the shank. Trim the fibers on the sides and top leaving 1/8" to form a head.

Terrestrials is a term used to describe land-born insects that end up on the water. They include beetles, crickets, grasshoppers, ants, leafhoppers and inchworms, just to name a few. They are a prime food source for trout in the summer and fall. Because of their size, they give the fish a big meal with one gulp. Terrestrial fishing opens doors for summer fly fishermen when mayfly and caddis activity is relegated to morning and evening hours. The best opportunity occurs at midday, when air and water temperatures rise and the land-born insects become active. Rain, wind and careless hopping carry these big juicy bugs to the water's surface, where they are easy prey for trout.

A fisherman's biggest challenge is battling bright summer conditions when terrestrial fishing is best. During summer when water levels are low and clear, shadows, reflections and silhouettes are more obvious than ever. You must approach the stream carefully.

Grasshoppers are large insects that are often animated as they struggle to escape the water. Sometimes trout get keyed on hoppers and in fast riffle water will eat anything remotely similar. There are dozens and dozens of grasshopper patterns out there, and most of them catch fish. For me, most are too complicated and time consuming. I'm not sure if the fish appreciate all those extended bodies and jointed legs. This month's pattern, the Letort Hopper, is by far the simplest and effective hopper pattern out there. The Letort Hopper was developed by Ed Shenk in the "cradle" of terrestrial fishing, the Letort Spring Creek in Pennsylvania. Ed is a legend of the limestone streams and considered to be one of America's finest short-rod anglers.

Compared to other patterns this hopper may seem unfinished and primitive, but Ed Shenk knew what he was doing. It's a simple fly with good body and wing outlines, deer-hair tips to suggest forelegs and jumping legs, and a large deer-hair head much like the real thing. Best of all it offers the tier an easy time at the vise. Hopper time will be here soon so time some up, give them a test flight and let me know how you do.

TYING TIPS

- 1) In bigger sizes you can substitute elk hair for the wing and poly yarn for the body.
- 2) Use all black materials and you have the Letort Cricket.
- 3) In smaller sizes, this pattern makes a great caddis imitation.
- 4) If you taper the front end of the body, you will have better success getting the turkey under wing to lay flat against the body.
- 5) By spraying the turkey tail feather with Krylon or artist fixative, you will be able to hold the barbs together and increase durability.
- 6) Vary size and body color to match the natural.