

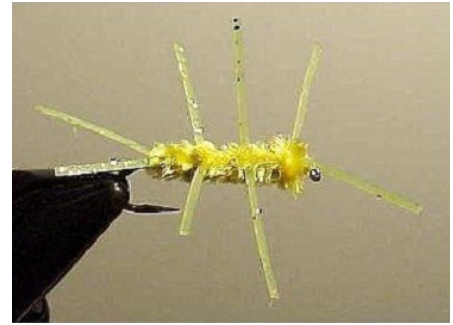
On The Fly

June 2006

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

PATTERN OF THE MONTH: Girdle Bug

Hook: 2X long, sizes 2-12.
Weight: Optional) Brass or tungsten bead.
Thread: Black 6/0.
Tail: One pair of rubber legs,
Body: Solid color or variegated chenille.
Rib: (Optional) Fine silver or gold wire.
Legs: Two pair of rubber legs for the no-bead-head version & three pair of legs for the bead-head version.
Antennae: One pair of rubber legs (for the no-bead-head version).



Tying Instructions:

- 1) Start the thread one eye length behind the eye. This is your marker for starting a neat tapered head. Wind the thread back to the bend of the hook.
- 2) Select a piece of rubber leg material about two times the length of the shank. Double the material in half and secure it at the fold on top of the hook with several wraps of thread to form a V-shaped tail facing rearward.
- 3) At this location, tie in a piece of your chenille then advance the thread to the position for the first set of legs.
- 4) Wrap the chenille forward to the hanging thread and tie-off. Pull the chenille back, out of the way, and then tie in the set of legs perpendicular to the shank, rather than swept backwards.
- 5) Advance the thread forward to the position for the second set of legs, then repeat Step 4.
- 6) Advance the thread forward to the next leg position (if you are using a bead head) or to the position for the antennae (if you are not using a bead head). Wrap the chenille forward to the hanging thread and tie-off.
- 7) If you are using a bead head, secure the third set of legs right behind the bead and perpendicular to the shank, then whip finish and apply cement. If you are not using a bead, secure the last set as forward-facing antennae, then form a neat tapered head, whip finish, and apply cement.

The Girdle Bug is widely known and used in the big waters of the Western United States where it was developed. This fly has saved the day for many anglers on some of the toughest waters of the region. Trout are the primary quarry, but the pattern is effective on steelhead, smallmouth bass and other pan fish. The name of this fly is based on an early source of the rubber for the legs. The Girdle Bug is perhaps the secret pattern of at least a few local experts on the famous Grand Ronde River. An article from 2004 claims that one of these locals took fourteen steelhead in under one hour on a short stretch of the Ronde. This is one of many testaments to the effectiveness of this fly. Try some when you fish the Grand Ronde.

How can a wary fish distinguish a live underwater fly from a dead (or fake) fly that is being carried along the current or stripped in by a fly fisher? One answer might be legs that are moving in life-like fashion. Soft hackle used on underwater flies is intended to create that illusion of life. The soft hackle from partridge or quail, tied long and flowing, does the job pretty well. These and other natural materials have been used for decades to add movement to the appendages of the fly. Man-made leg material, commonly called rubber legs, is thought by many to be better for fly legs, especially on imitations of big insects like stoneflies and dragonflies. It is more available, generally less expensive, easier to tie with, can be made in a multitude of sizes and colors, and is almost indestructible. The newest legs are made of silicone and contain sparkles, speckles, stripes and dots.

Why are rubber legs so popular and effective? Unlike barbules of a feather, the synthetic strands do not taper and therefore have a lot of weight or mass far out from their point of attachment. That mass tends to be very unstable and it moves almost on its own. That may not be scientifically accurate but it's my theory. So tie some up, give them a test flight and let me know how you do.

TYING TIPS

By varying the size and color of this fly, you can have a pattern that is effective for many species. Try yellow in a size 4 or 6 for bass and size 10 or 12 for bluegill. If you don't have variegated chenille, tie in two strands of different colors, twist them together and you get the same result. I like to tie in the legs a little long and then trim them to the right proportions when the fly is completed and still in the vise. That way you can concentrate on position and angle while the fly is under construction.