

Federation of Fly Fishers Fly of the Month

October, 1999 - A Family of Divers: Dahlberg & Offspring



Comments by Jim Abbs

As winter approaches, most fly tyers want to concentrate on patterns that meet one of two criteria. We are interested in flies that either will be useful somewhere where it is warm (in December and January), or flies that will be of especially great value early next season. This month's fly succeeds on both counts--you can use it in the south for warmwater or saltwater species and secondly it will be very effective as soon as the ice is off your favorite pike or muskie lake next spring. Basically, if you are interested in catching any of the great watery carnivores--like pike, muskie, tarpon, snook, striped, smallmouth and largemouth bass---the October Fly of the Month , the Dahlberg Diver, must be part of your arsenal.

Don't just take my word for it! The famous Eric Leiser has described the Dahlberg Diver as nothing less than revolutionary. Both warmwater and saltwater experts compliment Larry Dahlberg on his unique and clever design. The Tryons, in their book, *Figuring Out Flies*, suggest that this is one of the most dramatic fly-tying developments in recent years. So why is everyone so enthusiastic about this single fly?

Before the development of Dahlberg's "diver" almost all flies imitating baitfish or other non-insect critters (like frogs) either floated on the top of the water or were weighted to sink. While this amazing deer hair fly floats on top of the water, because of it's scooped head it also literally dives---like many natural creatures--when it is jerked along by retrieval of the fly line. As soon as the retrieval is stopped, the fly pops to the surface again. By changing the smoothness and speed of the retrieve, this bug gurgles, pops and wobbles, creating sounds and a stream of bubbles that many big game fish simply cannot resist.

A caution about the Dahlberg Diver. Larry Dahlberg developed this fly on the traditional "North Coast"...somewhere between his hometown of Grantsburg, Wisconsin and Brainerd, Minnesota. While he worked hard to get it just right so it would wobble, dive and swim like a live critter he had one problem. None of his clients would even tie it on their leaders because it looked so odd. The pattern described here is near the original. Obviously you can vary the tail (in length and materials) to create many other "divers".

Materials

Hook: Straight eye-heavy wire, Mustad 3366 in smaller sizes, or 34007 in larger sizes and for saltwater

Thread: Red, Size A

Weed guard: Monofilament, with a smaller diameter than the hook shank

Tail: 10-20 strands of gold flashabou, a black (and/or white) marabou feather and two black saddle feathers. A strip of rabbit fur, krystal flash or other materials may be used and also are effective.

Skirt: Natural tan/gray deer hair

Collar: Natural tan/gray deer hair

Head: Black deer hair

Tying Steps (This fly requires spinning of deer hair and hence a vise capable of holding big hooks very securely).

1. Attach thread and tie in the weed guard monofilament on the back of the bend of the hook. Wrap the mono with sufficient thread to hold it in place.
2. Tie on strands of gold flashabou at about 1/3 the distance of the hook shank back from the eye.
3. Tie in black (and/or white) marabou over the flashabou.
4. Position and tie in two saddle feathers---one on each side--flaring out.
5. Select 5-8 hackle fibers (tail should be a little longer than the length of the hook shank) and tie them in at the bend of the hook. Force the fibers against the bump to spread them, if desired.
6. Tie in the first clump of natural deer hair with the tips facing toward the rear for the skirt.
7. Tie in the second clump of deer hair for the collar with the tips facing forward and tighten (or spin the hair) so it flares out.
8. Tie in a additional clumps of hair up to the eye, packing (pushing it back against the first clump) with a packing tool and spining them to produce a dense flared section of deer hair in front of the skirt.
9. Tie off the thread and remove the fly from the vise for trimming.
10. Trim the fly to have the following profile (use illustration as a guide):**Head**-sloping and flat on the bottom. **Collar**-deer hair should be about twice the length of the head and at an angle of about 60-80 degrees from the sloping surface of the head.
11. Apply a generous amount of cement to the underside of head and at the base of the collar to provide good stiffness.
12. Replace the hook in the vise, bring the weed guard forward and tie it in. Cement the head and go fishing.

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You can direct any questions or comments to FOM at flyofthefmonth@fedflyfishers.org