

FFF Fly of the Month

KIRKHAM'S CRAY



By Ruth J. Zinck and Bob Bates

The Kirkham's Cray by Ruth Zinck caught my eye as I flipped through the 1990 Patterns of the Masters. I asked Ruth if I could use the information for a Fly of the Month. She said yes and sent me a fly to photograph. Step by step pictures are given on pages 159-161. If you don't have a copy, the FFF Oregon Council still has a few for \$20 plus \$3.50 for shipping and handling. Contact the Council, 2120 Robins Lane SE #101, Salem, OR 97306. Most of the information given below was copied from Patterns of the Masters. A few of my comments have been added.

"Joan Kirkham lives in Cambridge, Ontario and is one of the best and most creative tiers I know. She is also a dear friend and when I get east, spending hours talking tying with her is always a highlight of the trip. She showed me her crayfish pattern in June of 1989 and gave me permission to 'tell the world' at Conclave. It was too late to include the fly in last year's book but that is remedied now. I have made no changes in her pattern ... yet, especially since a lunker smallmouth grabbed it on my first cast." (I asked Ruth about the size of the "lunker." She replied that in her mind it was 8 pounds, but more likely it was 3.)

Fishing Suggestons

We know that bass like to eat crayfish. "Kirkham's Cray should be crawled over the rocky bottom of a lake or river and occasionally retrieved in short spurts. Depending on water depth, use a sink tip, full-sink line or weighted leader. However, I once got a good strike on the fly just as it hit the water."

One crayfish angler in Washington fishes rocky shorelines and catches trout. He says: cast toward shore from your boat or float tube, and let the fly bounce down the rocks. Use a slow hand twist retrieve to imitate a crayfish's walking movements, and a 2- to 3-inch strip retrieve with a pause to simulate their quick movements. (The same instructions that Ruth gave above for bass.)

Last month we found crayfish and crayfish parts in rainbow stomach samples. (It was during catch and release fishing sessions with stomach sampling by our state fish biologist.)

Materials

Hook: Mustad 79580 or 9672, Daiichi 2220 or 1720, Dai-Riki 700 or 710 or similar hooks, size 10

Thread: Black or brown Monocord

Back: Red fox squirrel (use long hair from middle area on top side of tail)

Head and Body: Medium size, brown/black, variegated chenille

Rib: 6-lb test clear monofilament

Claws: Red fox squirrel (as above)

Tying Steps

1. Wrap thread to bend. Cut a bunch of squirrel hair slightly larger than a household match. Hold near tips and comb out short hair. Tie in remainder by butts on top of hook with most of hair extending beyond bend of hook. Trim butts at an angle, and wrap over cut ends. Return thread to bend.
2. Head: Tie in chenille, and wrap to 1/4 shank length from bend. Secure, half hitch and then move chenille to a material holder to clear work area. (Expose thread core by stripping off fuzzy chenille to make tie in easier.)
3. Burn one end of an 8" piece of monofilament to make a small blob. Tie the blob end in on top of the hook at the half hitch. The blob will prevent the mono from pulling out. The rest of the mono should be moved to the material holder.
4. Right claw: Cut a bunch of squirrel hair slightly smaller than a household match. Comb out short hair, and use a hair stacker to even the tips. With tips of hair toward bend, wrap one circle of tying thread around the bunch and then place it on the far side of the hook. Tips should protrude about 1 inch to left of thread. Tie down firmly.
5. Tie down butt ends of claw along top left side of hook to 1/8" from eye. Trim butts at an angle.
6. Left claw: Return thread to right claw tie-in point. Repeat steps 4 and 5 on near side of hook.

7. Wrap both sets of trimmed butts.

8. Wrap monofilament clockwise around base of right claw 2 to 3 times. Bring monofilament under hook and wrap left claw counter-clockwise finishing across top of hook on eye side of claws. Make one turn around hook. Keep tension on mono.

9. Wrap thread to monofilament and tie down. DO NOT CUT. Mono should extend beyond far side of hook. Return thread to eye.

10. Cover wrapped squirrel body and base of claws with head cement.

11. Wind chenille to within 1/8" from eye and tie off. Trim.

12. Bring squirrel hair over chenille and, pulling it TIGHT, tie down at eye. DO NOT TRIM.

13. Wrap monofilament around body in wide spirals toward eye. First wrap should be close to base of claws. Tie down well. Trim.

14. Whip finish under tail at eye. Use head cement on tail wraps and whip finish. Cut tail 1/4" beyond eye.

The last step in any fly tying project is to take your gems out to your favorite body of water. Apply your knowledge as to where bass might be hanging out around rocky areas with crayfish. Carefully creep your fly along the bottom, and be ready for a fight with a lunker.

Please Credit FFF Website or FFF Clubwire with any use of the pattern.
You can direct any questions or comments to flyofthethmonth@fedflyfishers.org