

FFF Fly of the Month

BITCH CREEK NYMPH



By Bob Bates

The Bitch Creek Nymph is an old standby pattern for many anglers. Most say that it is a stonefly nymph imitation, but others use it as a searching or attractor pattern. The real history behind this pattern is unknown according to the my books. George F. Grant in *Montana Trout Flies*, 1981, wrote that he couldn't find a reference to it "...but there is little doubt but that the pattern is of Montana origin." He also commented: "It is difficult to establish whether or not the 'Bitch Creek' was the first of the large Montana nymph patterns to employ rubber appendages, but it is a trend that is becoming increasingly evident."

Fishing the Bitch Creek Nymph calls for letting it sink to or near the bottom. In fast moving streams, make a short cast upstream and let the fly sink as it comes downstream. Keep control of the line so you can feel the strike. During high water times look for backwater and side channels where the visibility for fish might be a little better than in the main flow. Also it will be a bit easier to put the fly near the bottom slower water.

Some fly anglers will throw a Bitch Creek Nymph when other lake flies aren't performing. Generally, a full sinking line is used, but in shallow water use a floating line so the fly doesn't sink too deeply. Whether it is color or wiggling legs is unknown, but fish like it and will strike.

Materials:

Hook: Mustad 9672 or 79580, 2-12

Thread: Black 3/0

Antenna & tail: White rubber

Weight: Lead-free wire (optional)

Rib: Yellow monocord (optional)

Back (overlay): Black chenille

Body: Orange or yellow chenille

Hackle: Brown

Gills: White ostrich herl (optional)

Thorax: Black chenille

Tying Steps:

This recipe and tying style is slightly different from ones you will find in some pattern books. Several books recommend a braided chenille body, but for many tiers this is too much work. And if you really want to cheat (or be lazy) you can wind the orange chenille and paint the back with a black waterproof felt pen.

1. Smash down the barb before you start tying if you wish.
2. Start the thread anywhere you want and wind it forward to the eye. Fold a full length piece of rubber in half and place the open ends on top of the shank and sticking out over the eye less than a shank length. Secure them with several thread wraps. Now pull and stretch the loop portion, and wind thread over it to bend. A couple thread wraps will set the tail rubber; trim excess. Leave thread at bend.
3. It is optional, but my Bitch Creek Nymphs are weighted under the thorax. I like lead-free wire on spools because I feel it is easier to control. Hold spool in the palm of your hand and place end of wire across the shank where you want the back of the coil. Wrap a tight coil forward letting the wire slip through your fingers as needed. Break off or cut wire. Be sure to leave one or two eye widths of space between eye and front of coil to tie in several materials. Wind thread over the coil to hold it in place, and return thread to bend.
4. Attach rib, black chenille and orange chenille, and wind thread to mid-shank. Before attaching the chenille, strip off the fuzzy stuff and secure chenille by thread core. The black chenille should be on top of the hook. Wrap orange chenille to mid-

shank, secure and trim. Bring black chenille over the orange chenille, secure at mid-shank and trim. Spiral rib forward, secure and trim. A rib helps secure the black chenille overlay.

5. Some tiers leave the black chenille and use it for the thorax. However, I frequently tie on one size larger chenille for the thorax unless I wrapped a lot of wire under the thorax.
6. Attach hackle, ostrich herl and black chenille at front of body. Wind thread forward to about one eye width from eye, wrap chenille (with first wrap tight against front of body) forward, secure and trim. Hold hackle and herl together and spiral them through the chenille, secure at front of thorax and trim. Modern saddle hackles are good for this because they are long enough to be held in the fingers.
7. Shape head, whip finish and add a drop of head cement to guarantee the thread doesn't slip.

Bitch Creek Nymphs have been in my fly box for years, and I have seen them in many other fly boxes, when the owners let me look. It is probably a searching pattern for most of the year, but when the big stonefly nymphs are moving in the spring then it is a stonefly nymph imitation.

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