

## HEADLESS BLUE WING OLIVE



By Bob Bates

There is no “one and only way” to tie a fly that catches fish. For example, several years ago I was tying this pattern at a Federation of Fly Fishers Conclave. A friend decided to make a survey. His report: “Today I saw five ways to tie a parachute.”

This tying technique came off of a website that I have followed for years. It is <http://www.bobsflytying.com>, Bob’s Fly Shop in Loveland, Colorado. It’s monthly newsletters have fishing stories, cartoons and, most interesting to me, Julie’s Fly Tying Tips. Several of her flies, including this one, were added to my fly box.

Julie Ray, like many tiers, experiments with different techniques in the “Yes that works, but what if...?” style. Sometime before 1997 she saw a fly tier using a half hitch to secure a parachute hackle. So if that works how about a whip finish? The Headless Blue Wing Olive was born, and the last time I corresponded with her she said that she ties all of her parachutes using a Matarelli whip finishing tool.

This pattern imitates the blue-winged olive (*Baetis*) mayfly and related genera which, depending on location, hatch from late February to November. Many feel it is the basic mayfly along most North American rivers. Some are multi-brooded species and have two or three hatches a year. Therefore, keep a good supply of these flies to match the hatch. In the cool temperatures of spring hatches might come off from noon to early afternoon. During warmer days hatches will be in the morning and evening. In really hot weather they might hatch at night. Cool and drizzly days offer the chance of memorable hatches. If you can, check with a local fly shop for the latest information.

Fishing this fly is like any other dry fly. Floating line, long leader, appropriate tippet size and dead drift.

### Materials:

**Hook:** Mustad 94840 or Tiemco TMC 100, sizes 14-20

**Thread:** Rusty dun, 8/0 – 14/0

**Tail:** Medium blue dun hackle fibers

**Post:** White turkey flats, poly yarn, crystal flash or calf tail

**Hackle:** Medium blue dun

**Body:** Medium olive dubbing

## Tying Steps:

1. If you want barbless flies, smash the barb with smooth jaw pliers before you start tying.



2. Start thread in center of hook. Select a bunch of hackle fibers for the tail, hold them over the hook so a shank length of the tips extend beyond the bend, trim fibers at mid-shank and secure. Hold the fibers on top of the hook, and wind thread rearward to above the barb. Wind thread forward to a point  $1/3^{\text{rd}}$  shank length back from eye.



3. Pull off any short fibers on the turkey flat so the tips are even.



4. Cut off a bunch of fibers from one side of the turkey flat and fold them together to look like a small paint brush. Secure this “brush” at the  $1/3^{\text{rd}}$  point with a shank length of the tips facing forward. Trim butts, and wind thread to make a smooth ramp behind the post.



5. Stand up tips and wind a thread cone in front of post. I usually put a few thread wraps around post to pull fibers together a little and strengthen the post.



6. Select a hackle with barbs (fibers) that are 1-1/2 to 2 gap widths long, pull or cut off all longer barbs. The web should be less than 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the barb length.

7. Place the feather vertically, tip up along the post with the bare shaft extending about a hook eye width above the shank. Have the shiny side of the feather toward the post. Wind thread up shaft and post three or four turns and then back down again. Leave a little bare shaft above the highest thread wrap.

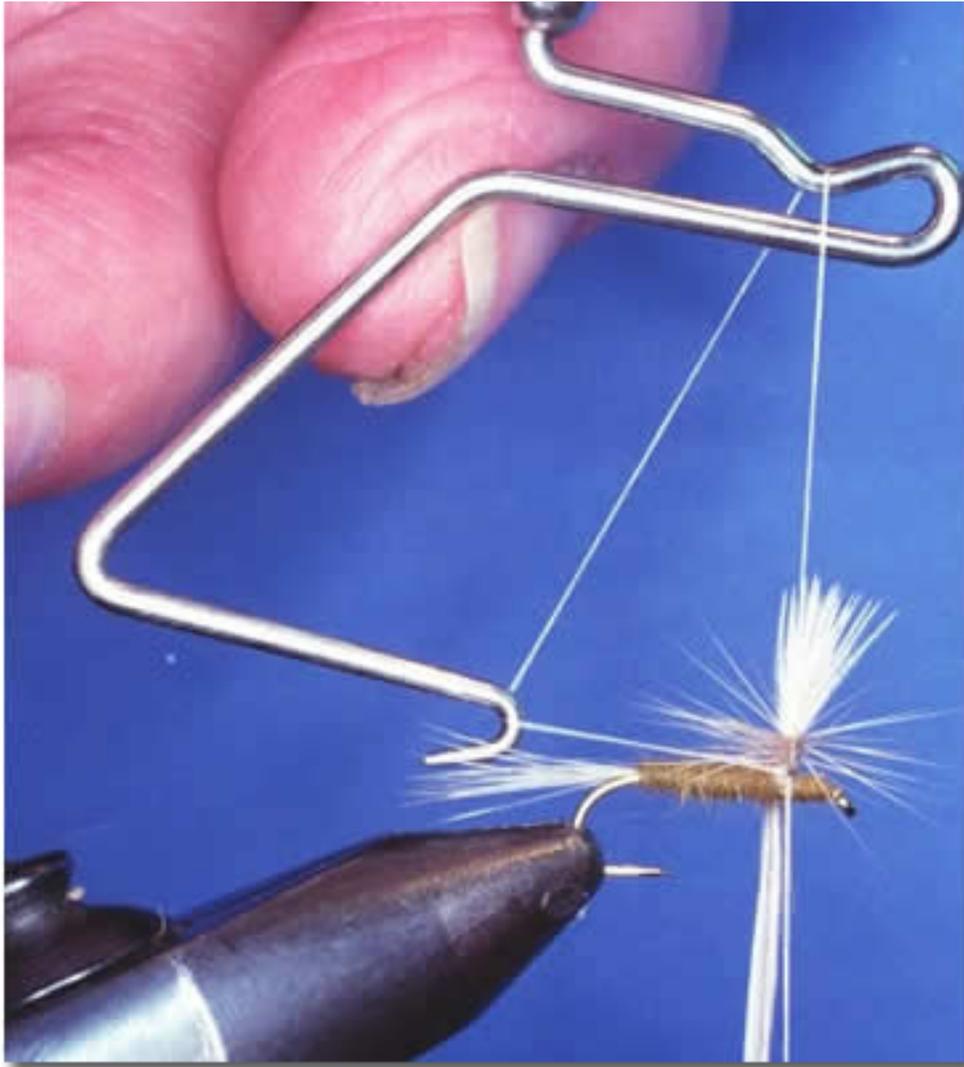


8. Bend the butt of the shaft rearward along the shank and secure it with a few rearward winds of thread. Trim excess shaft, and wind thread to a point above the barb.



9. Dub thread using your favorite technique, and wrap body forward to the eye and back to the post. The body should be a little thicker around the post. Put the last thread wrap immediately behind the post, and let the bobbin hang on far side of hook to keep tension on the thread.

10. Grab hackle tip in pliers, and pull feather down to put a little kink in the shaft. Wrap feather clockwise around post with each wrap below the preceding one. Three to five wraps should be enough for most water conditions. When you are down to the body let the hackle pliers hang on the far side of the body. Reach under hook with the left hand to hold pliers down and tension hackle. With bobbin in right hand, move tensioned thread three times clockwise around post, each time sliding it between body and parachute hackle.



11. Hook a Matarrelli whip finish tool onto thread and tip it up so wraps will be around the post below the parachute. Keep tension on thread as you wind it around feather and post. After three or four winds hold the tool down so when you unhook it so you won't trap hackle fibers.

12. Trim thread and excess hackle. Carefully put a little head cement on bottom of post.

**Closing comments:** After a little practice this technique is a lot easier than other parachute methods that I know. Now I use it for all of my parachute patterns: Adams, Callebaetis, PMD, ants and anything needed to match the hatch. A point to remember, the blue-winged olive comes in light to dark olive, olive brown, dark brown and reddish brown; so tie it in several different body colors. One thing for sure this pattern has fooled many trout.

Please Credit FFF Website or FFF Clubwire with any use of the pattern.  
You can direct any questions or comments to [flyofthemonth@fedflyfishers.org](mailto:flyofthemonth@fedflyfishers.org)