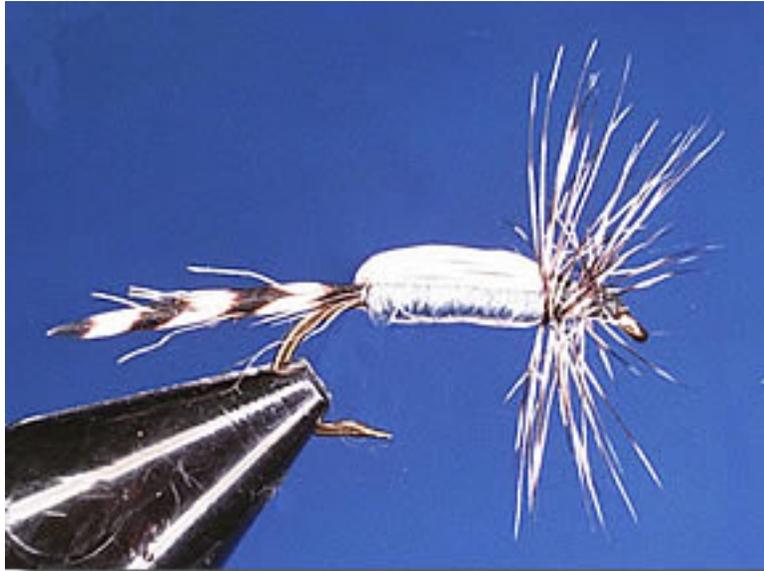


LADY McCONNELL



By Bob Bates

Here is a pattern that every stillwater angler should have in the fly box. Brian Chan, Kamloops, British Columbia, Canada developed this pattern in 1979 to represent an almost completely emerged adult chironomid (midge). He named it after McConnell Lake just south of Kamloops, B.C., Canada where he tested it. Trout in McConnell Lake and elsewhere have an eagerness to feed on adult chironomids.

Just about every lake and many streams have chironomids, and fish willingly feed on the larva, pupa and adult stages of the insect. Some anglers note that fish seem to prefer the larva or pupa stages over the adult. However, you should always look for an opportunity to fish the adult. Best times to fish it are early morning and late evening. Chironomids are a nice insect for fly anglers as they might hatch any time there is ice free water. I have seen fish rising to chironomids in the only ice free water at the outflow of a lake. Unfortunately it was before the start of fishing season.

One late spring day a visitor to my part of the world talked me into taking him fishing. A difficult task to say the least. After dinner we went to a nearby quality lake. We drifted around a while enjoying the evening, but we were seeing only a few fish. When the evening rise started I had him put on a size 16 Lady McConnell, and he started catching fish immediately. He was amazed at how fast he hooked (and carefully release) so many nice rainbows.

That evening all we had to do cast our floating lines, and let the flies sit quietly on the surface for a few seconds. The fish attacked them with abandon. At other times it helps to move the fly with a little jiggle or strip it at a moderate speed to imitate hatching or egg laying insects.

Materials List:

Hook: Tiemco TMC 100, Mustad 94840 or other dry fly hook, sizes 12-18

Thread: Black 6/0, 8/0 or 14/0

Tail: Grizzly hackle tip over white Zelon

Shellback: Deer hair

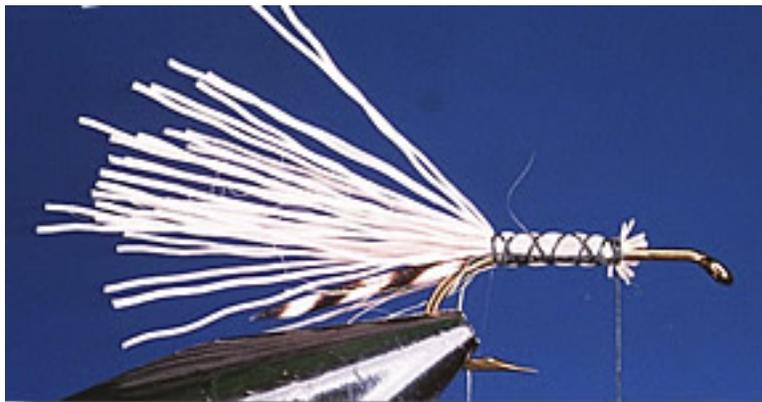
Body: Gray polypropylene, dubbing or tying thread

Hackle: Grizzly

Tying Steps:



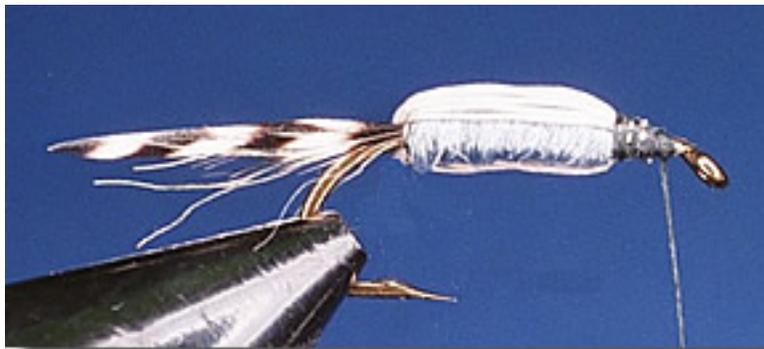
1. Wind thread on rear 2/3 rds of hook shank, and leave thread at bend of hook (near barb). Attach a few strands of white Zelon on top of the hook, this is a new variation of the pattern that is not on all my flies. Make the Zelon about a shank length long. Tie a grizzly hackle tip on top of the hook longer than needed and pull it to make a shank length tail.



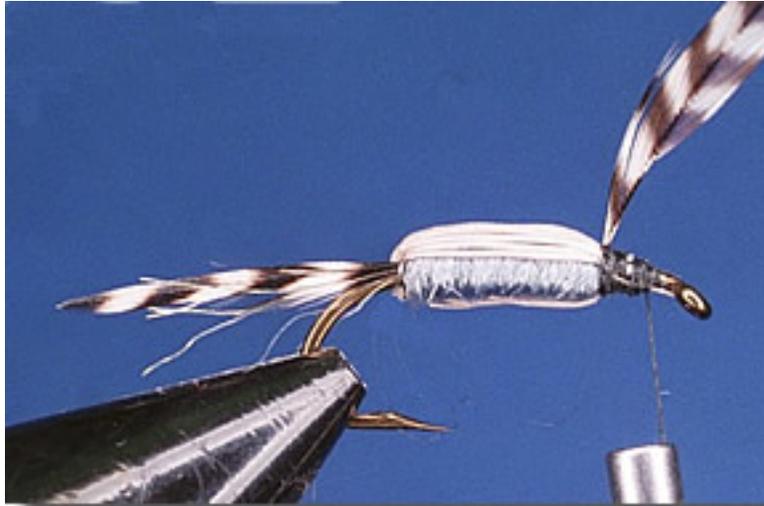
2. Cut a small amount of deer hair. How much depends on hook size. A clump about the diameter of a wooden match stick is about right for a size 12 hook. Clean out under fur and short hairs, cut tips and place tips on hook at a point about 1/3 rd shank length back from the eye. (Butts should be pointing to the rear.) Bind the deer hair on top of hook without spinning it, wind thread backward to the bend of the hook, and spiral the thread to front of the deer hair.



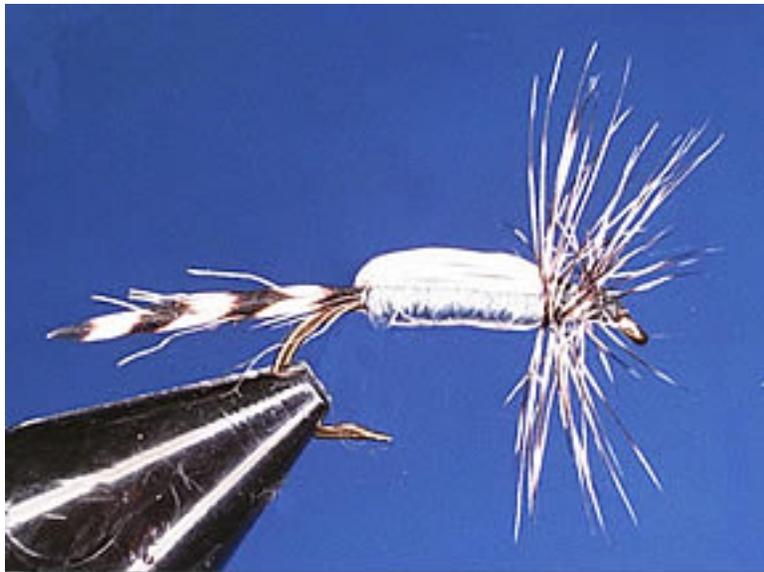
3. Attach poly yarn, wind thread over it to the bend and spiral thread forward to front of deer hair. Wrap poly body to front of deer hair, secure and trim. Keep the body slim to be like a chironomid. (Or the body may be dubbed to match the color of local insects.)



4. Bring deer hair forward and bind it down forming a shellback. Take care to keep the deer hair on the top half of the body and that it isn't twisted out of position from thread torque. Trim excess hair and wind thread over butts. Return thread to front of body/shellback.



5. Select a grizzly feather with barbs that are about 1-1/2 gap widths long. Strip off the fuzzy fibers and other unwanted barbs. Attach it to hook with the dull side of the feather facing forward. Leave a little bare stem showing above the thread, bind down and trim excess stem. Leave thread about one eye width back from the eye. (Some tiers use two feathers to produce a fuller hackle.)



6. Pull hackle forward over eye to kink the stem. This and the bare stem help the hackle wrap properly. Wrap hackle forward to thread, secure and trim excess. Wind thread to make a small head, whip finish, trim and add a drop of head cement.

Closing comments: I tie this pattern with light poly and grizzly as well as the darker body and hackle pictured. It takes a lot less time to tie a Lady McConnell than it does to write or read about it. Those mean trout tend to shred them so tie a lot.

I almost never leave home without a bunch of Lady McConnells in my fly box. It has been my consistent producer for many years. Now when the fish start rising and I don't have my Ladies with me I am lost and feel I should go home.

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