

ERV EMERGER



By Bob Bates

John Newbury, Chewelah, Washington tied the fly for the step pictures and wrote the following history leading to its development.

“The Birth of the Erv Emerger”

“In the middle of June 2005 the caddis had been hatching for several evenings. The first evening the hatch was sparse, and the old standby parachute elk hair caddis was working as always. Five nice rainbows were landed. On night two the hatch was heavier, and I only managed to fool three rainbows on the adult caddis. The third night caddis owned the river, and I only managed to fool two on the dry fly. On the fourth night my guest was Mark Few (the coach of the Gonzaga basketball team), and Mike Ressa, a fly fisherman and friend, agreed to take us by boat on the river. We went fishing down the river from hole to hole. The Caddis were everywhere, and catching fish was tough. The fish were there, and they were porpoising in a feeding frenzy. You’d see the wide back and high fin, large tail and then gone...over and over again. They were not taking the dry (adult), they wanted the nymph. So we tried some soft hackles, but the fish were being particular. It seemed the fish were keying on the soft hackle as it swung near the end of the drift. So presentation was everything.”

“On the way home Mike, Mark and I talked about how to catch fish that were targeting a swimming pupa. Arriving home after midnight, I had to know more about the swimming pupa stage. I reread two books: *Caddisflies* by Gary LaFontaine and *The Caddis and the Angler* by Larry Solomon and Eric Leiser. I finished reading at two AM and went out to the vise and tied up a pattern by Gary called the Dancing Caddis, which was tied on a Swedish dry fly hook. So, back to the river I went, tied on the Dancing Caddis and a soft hackle dropper. At the end of the night I had two fish on the Dancing Caddis and two on the dropper. Once again the dropper was effective in the final swing of the drift.”

“At home, I once again put my head in those books. I started thinking about a conversation I had years earlier with the late Gary LaFontaine at the last FFF Conclave he attended in Livingston, Montana. He said that I was on to something in reference to producing the hinge on my Wiggle Damsel. He said to keep pursuing that line

of thought. Thinking about what he had said, those swimming pupa and getting the proper presentation, it dawned on me that I might have had the answer all along - make a caddis that's hinged. I sat down and tied some hinged caddis. Its basically a soft hackle hinged beneath an elk hair caddis. This enables the soft hackle to be kept in the surface film."

"New night. Back to the river. I tied the new fly onto my tippet, flipped the fly out onto the water and started peeling line off my reel to enable me to cast. While taking line off of my reel all of sudden something grabbed the fly, I felt an instant jerk and it was gone. The excitement was looming. The next five casts produced five fish. Hey, I'm onto something. After the third fish, I heard an angler from a boat on the river say, 'Hey, what are you using?' I answered, 'I don't know. It doesn't have a name, and I guarantee you don't have anything like it in your box anyhow.' After the fifth fish the guide and his client came to shore with a big fancy net offering to help me land my fish. I politely said: 'I don't need any help, and you really just want to see the fly that's in this fish's mouth.' After releasing that fish, four more big bows followed. Fishing was good the next couple of nights."

"Its now the last week of June and I have a visitor, my friend and sometimes fishing partner, Harry Lemire, stopped on his way home from B C. The first two nights we fished the caddis and hex hatch off the bank. The caddis were in swarms, and I gave Harry a handful of flies I thought would be effective. I told him to tie on the new fly. He ties one on and starts casting. It didn't take long and he was into a big rainbow. Over and over again that night he was into big rainbows. He also, said in his soft, well spoken and easy manner: 'John, I think you're on to something. You might have even revolutionized caddis fishing.' The next night we fished off the bank again with similar good results. Then for two nights we fished out of my boat so we could target the hexes down river in a huge back eddy. Once again he was impressed."

"He kept asking what I was going to name this new fly. I asked him what he thought of the Erv Emerger. He thought it had a nice ring to it. I told him the story of how Steve 'Erv' Tveit had showed me this section of the river in 1982, and told me he thought we would catch some nice fish on a fly. The water was so big and intimidating, but there were caddis all over. For the next 10 to 12 years Erv and I fished the river together. After getting married he fished the river less and less because of increased work and family responsibilities. I told Harry that Steve had gotten ill in the spring of 2005. The diagnosis was a brain tumor that was cancerous. I thought I'd name the fly in his honor. He had three operations and was given a short lease on life."

"I tied the fly first in public at the FFF Conclave in Livingston, Montana in August 2005. People were amazed at the simplicity and potential effectiveness of the fly. My friend, Al Beatty, was at the show, I gave him one of the flies and told him of its successes. He published the Erv Emerger in the Spring 2006 Annual Gear Guide issue of *Fly Fish America*. The rest is history."

The Erv Emerger is a "wet" fly and a "dry" fly. Fish it using a floating line, and drift it through "nymphing" fish with a drag free float. Be ready to fight a fish at any time but especially near the end of the drift.

Photography by Bob Bates

Materials List:

Trailer Hook

Hook: Dai Riki 135 size 12

Thread: Brown

Rib: Fine gold wire

Body: STS Trilobal, black, olive brown, rusty brown

Thorax: Ostrich herl, brown

Hackle: Hungarian partridge rump, brown phase preferred

Floating Body:

“Hook”: Stainless steel wire, 0.013-inch diameter, 1.25 inches long

Thread: Brown

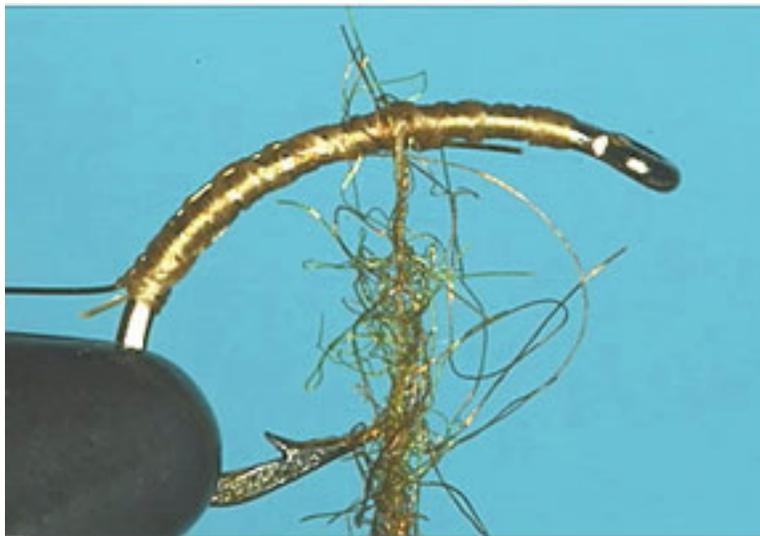
Wing: Elk mane

Tying Steps:

This fly is tied in two phases. First the wet (trailer) fly portion is tied like many wet patterns. Then the trailer fly is hooked onto stainless steel “staple” and the floating fly completed.



1. Start the thread at the rear of the fly, wind forward to near the eye leaving some bare shank, and return thread to a point above the point of the hook. Put rib on hook, wind thread over it well around bend and return to a little in front of mid shank.



2. Use a tacky dubbing wax on thread. Put dubbing on thread and place it so the dubbed body will start at a position above the point of the hook. Keep dubbing thin, and roll the dubbing in the same direction between the thumb and first finger.



3. Wrap dubbing well around bend and return to starting point, and build a little shoulder at back of thorax.



4. Wind rib forward many turns pulling it down into the abdomen. Tie off in front of body. Attach ostrich herl with stem side up to give a fuller thorax.



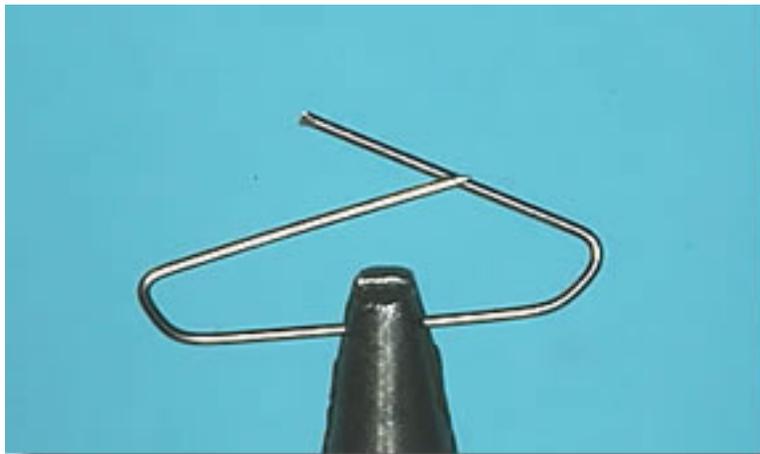
5. Wrap ostrich herl forward stopping about two eye widths from the eye. Secure and trim excess.



6. Moisten fingers and stroke ostrich herl back. Select a Hungarian partridge feather with barbs that are about the length of the hook. Tie it by the stem in front of the thorax. Tying by the stem gives a more durable fly.



7. Grab feather by the stem (not the barbs), and wrap it forward 2-1/2 turns. Stroke the barbs back as you wrap. Wind the thread rearward a little, if necessary, to make the barbs slope backward. Secure and whip finish.



8. Use smooth jaw pliers when working with the stainless steel wire. Serrations on the jaws might let the wire slip, or they might nick the wire making it weaker. Grab the one and one quarter inch long wire in the middle and bend into an open staple or paper clip shape. Be sure the ends of the wire overlap. If the ends just meet they sometimes slip when you are playing a big fish.



9. Place one end of the bent wire in the vise and slip the trailer fly over one end as shown.



10. Start the thread in the middle of the staple or paper clip and wind thread to hold parts together. Gradually work outward. As you work the thread winds outward from the center make sure you don't restrict either end. Especially keep the end with the trailer fly free. This is about enough thread winding.



11. Use the pliers to twist the front part of the wire to a horizontal position so it looks like a regular ring eye on a hook.



12. Turn the fly over in the vise so the trailer fly is down. Select a generous portion of elk mane, about a pencil diameter, and tie it onto the stainless steel wire. Have the thread wraps farther back from the eye than you normally would. Elk mane doesn't flair like body hair does.



13. Slip your scissors between the wire and the elk mane with the blades on top and bottom of the bundle. Cut elk mane behind the eye. Hold wing tightly and unwind most of the thread winds so you can rewind them closer to the eye. Whip finish and put a little head cement on the thread only.



14. Turn the fly over and clip any elk hair that slipped around to the bottom. Also clip some of the fibers at the bottom of the wing. Make sure the trailer fly is free to move.



15. Here is a trailer fly that was tied with scud back. Experiment a little with different patterns.

Closing comments: Caddis flies are common in just about all of the streams and lakes worldwide. There are times when a high floating Elk Hair Caddis doesn't do the trick. That is the time to turn to an emerger. The Ery Emerger is a little more complicated to tie, but having a few of them in your fly box can do wonders for your catch rate. So tie a few, and go fishing.

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