

BLACK TAIL BEAD HEAD



By Bob Bates

Sometimes fairly simple fly patterns catch lots of fish. Joel Popham from Spokane Valley, Washington has been exercising northern Idaho fish for years with this pattern. He showed us how to tie it at the Western Rocky Mountain Council (FFF) Fly Fishing Exposition in West Yellowstone, Montana, June 30, 2007.

Northern Idaho has many streams and lakes with cold water in which cutthroat and rainbow trout flourish. That means that fishing can be good to excellent if you know what you are doing and exactly what rock to fish behind. The streams are high in the spring with runoff from melting snow in the mountains. Also, the lakes are at their deepest. That is a good time to use wet fly tactics. Joel uses this pattern like a Woolly Bugger. Later in the year floating patterns become important.

In streams or lakes I use floating, sink tip or full sinking lines depending on water depth and probable location of fish.

Lakes are usually best fished from some sort of floating device. That includes everything from a real boat to a float tube with all kinds of pontoon boats in between. Once you have the floating device then you need to think about the presentation. Many times it is a matter of casting as far as you can, letting the fly sink and bringing it back to you. The retrieve can be a slow hand twist,

a strip-pause, a short strip or a long strip like you were trying to pull the fly away from the fish. If you don't want to work that hard you can resort to "bobber" fishing by using a strike indicator. Measure the water depth by clamping forceps onto the fly, lowering them to the bottom or top of weeds and set the strike indicator where it will hold the fly at the proper depth. Oh yes, take the forceps off the fly before you start fishing. Now all you have to do is wait for the "bobber" to go down so you can strike. Frequently the "bobber" will sink when you are watching a bird, talking to a friend or pouring a cup of coffee.

Small streams in north Idaho are usually waded. It is a matter of casting so the fly will sink a little, and following the drift near a rock through a seam or other place where a fish might be waiting for a meal to move by. Depending on conditions some mending of the line might be needed to keep the fly on the right path. Mending is usually a quick flip of the rod to remove a belly in the line caused by water currents. Ideally, the fly isn't moved by the mend. If you have trouble with mending talk to good casters in your fly club, take a lesson from a FFF Certified Fly Casting Instructor or go to your favorite fly shop. Joel sometimes suspends it from a bushy floating pattern in slow stretches of moving water. If the bushy pattern does anything strange, strike.

As far as I know this pattern doesn't imitate any particular insect, and it can be changed in several ways to make it more attractive to fish. Lead or lead-free wire or heavy beads can be added to help it sink faster.

Materials List:

Hook: Gamakatsu P10-2LLH 12-16

Thread: Gray, 6/0

Beads: Blue or pink glass

Tail: Marabou, black

Highlight: Krystal flash, usually a lighter color.

Body: First layer, peacock, Ice Dub. Make the second layer a lighter color. (Color of dubbing optional)

Hackle: Any soft feather; partridge, juvenile hen etc. dun or brown

Tying steps:



1. Put bead on hook and place hook in vise. Start thread at bend of hook, spiral to the bead and spiral back to the bend.



2. Tie on a shank length black marabou tail, trim excess and leave thread at bend.



3. Tie in a few pieces (2 or 3) of Krystal flash on each side of tail just to give it a little bit of color. Near side first then far side. Make the Krystal flash the same length as tail. Usually the flash is a light color.



4. Bring the thread to the bend and put a small amount of peacock color Ice Dub on the thread. Wrap the first layer forward.



5. Spiral thread to bend and then put sparse UV pearl or golden yellow Ice Dub on thread. Wrap the thread and dubbing forward. The over-dubbing should be sparse enough to let the first dubbing layer to show through. Joel uses different layers depending on what he wants. Sometimes he puts the lighter layer on first and the darker layer second.



6. Tie in hackle by the butt, make two turns and secure. Clip off excess feather. Clean it up a bit, and whip finish between hackle and bead.

Closing comments: This pattern is an easy one to add to your fly box. It has a good history so it should catch fish for you also. Try a few on your favorite waters.

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