

## CRAWDAD



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### Opening Comments

December is the time of year in the Northern U.S. to practice our fly tying. Janet Schimpf, a professional tier, in Montesano, WA has the ideal pattern for winter practice. She demonstrated it at the 2012 Washington Fly Fishing Fair in Ellensburg, WA. It requires a bit of preparation before you put thread to steel.

Take brown feathers from the neck area of a rooster pheasant skin. Strip off the fibers on the butt part of the stem. Clip out the tip to make a claw. Use the picture above and Step 5 for scale. Coat them with head cement or lacquer. Prepare a bunch of them.

Eyes are pre burned 80-pound monofilament. As the eyes are burning hold the monofilament so you get an angle in the monofilament. Blow out the fire when the eye is big enough. Be careful not to touch your lips. It hurts, I know. Let it cool a little, and when you cut it off leave a shank to tie it on the hook. Make a bunch of eyes.

Legs are prepared from pheasant body feathers. Strip off the fuzzy stuff at the butt of the feather. Then separate the barbs to make three legs on each

side. Look at the picture above and you will see that the distance from first to last leg is about equal to the length of the thorax. Do not cut off the tip now you will need it for a tie down later. Coat legs with head cement or lacquer and let them dry. Make enough legs for the number of crawdads you are tying.

How do you fish a crawdad? If your lake or stream has a sandy or small gravel bottom you are in luck. Just cast, let it sink to the bottom and start a slow retrieve.

A friend made a study of crawdads. Reports by biologists and others told him that trout, smallmouth bass, brookies and largemouth bass generally fed on crawdads that were 3/4- to 1-inch long and occasionally 1-1/2 inches long. The 3- to 4-inch crawdads are too big and mean for most fish.

He found that bending the hook shank was a lot easier than weighting the fly to ride point up. Before finding the Dai-Riki 700B (4XL) hook, he would bend the shank of Mustad 9671 or 9672 hooks. (Janet did not bend the hook.)

Many crawdads live around rocky areas in our lakes and streams. Cast toward shore from your floating device. A sink-tip line can be used in shallow water. However, most of the time he used a type III or type V full sink line. Let the fly sink to the bottom, and bounce down the rocks. Use a strip (2- to 3-inches) and pause retrieve. Crawdads walk slowly, and a slow hand twist retrieve imitates their movements. Fish generally take the fly from the side, and sometimes all you see of a strike is the line moving sideways.

### **Materials list**

**Hook:** 4XL size 4 or 6

**Weight:** Lead or lead free wire same diameter as hook wire, optional

**Thread:** Same as body color; brown, tan or olive

**Whiskers and tail:** Moose hair

**Eyes:** Burned 80-pound mono filament.

**Thorax:** Chenille, light or dark olive, size 1 or 2 Also brown or tan

**Claws:** Ringneck Pheasant neck feathers

**Legs:** Ringneck pheasant body feathers

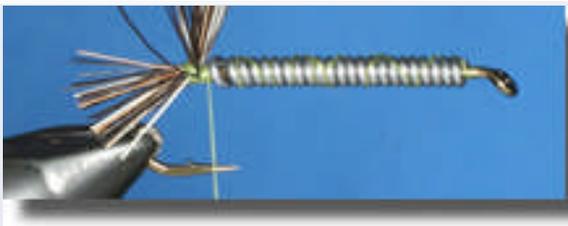
**Body:** V-rib; olive, tan or brown

### Tying steps



#### Step 1

Wrap on the lead coil and break off excess. Never cut the lead with your scissors. You can put a few thread winds over the lead coil to hold it in place.



#### Step 2

Take a small bundle of moose hair clean out under fur and clip off a little of the tips. Tie it on by the tips at the bend. Use a couple of thread winds to hold the long part of the hair back. Do not clip it off.



#### Step 3

Tie eyes on top of hook at bend so they point outward at about 45 degrees on each side.



#### Step 4

Prepare a piece of chenille by pulling off the fuzz to expose the thread core. Tie it on at about mid-shank by this thread core. This way you do not get a lump when you start wrapping the chenille. Wrap the chenille toward the eyes. Put the last wrap between the eyes and the moose hair. Let the chenille hang do not trim.



#### Step 5

Tie one set of claws on the far side of the chenille and pointing past the end of the hook. Put the dull or concave side down. Don't worry about the mess you are making on the chenille. It will be fixed later.



#### Step 6

Tie in the second claw on the near side. Now get ready to tie on the legs.



### Step 7

Clip off some of the tip of the leg feather, but leave enough to tie them in. Tie legs in by the tip where you tied in the claws. Put the dull or concave side up and have the feather sticking out between the eyes. Leave thread on the lead coil as shown.



### Step 8

Gently pick up the claws and legs, and make one chenille wrap between the eyes and the claws. Let the claws and legs lay back. Wrap chenille toward the hook eye covering the mess you made when tying in legs and claws. Secure chenille at hook eye end of thorax and trim excess.



### Step 9

Tie olive V-rib with flat side toward hook. Make sure it is held against the chenille thorax.



### Step 10

Move the thread to between the thorax and the abdomen. Bring the legs between claws over the thorax and secure. Return thread to between thorax and abdomen.



### Step 11

Bring the moose between the eyes to make a shellback over the thorax. Secure it at hook eye end of the thorax, and continue winding thread over the moose to the hook eye. Wind thread back and forth over the moose. Leave thread hanging at the eye. Cut excess moose beyond the eye as shown.



### Step 12

Wrap V-rib toward hook eye so the rounded side is out, secure behind hook eye and trim. Make sure to pull the V-rib tightly.



### Step 13

Whip finish and put head cement on whip finish if you wish. Top view of finished crawdad.

### Closing Comments

This pattern will give you something to do this winter, and then start fishing it in the spring. Make different size crawdads. In the spring start with the smallest ones then as the year progresses use bigger ones.

Please Credit FFF Website or FFF Clubwire with any use of the pattern.

You can direct any questions or comments to FOM at  
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