

BALANCED STREAMER



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Federation of Fly Fishers - Washington Council

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Opening Comments

Fly patterns that hang horizontally in the water have become a staple in my part of the world. This includes Washington to North Dakota in the United States and British Columbia to Manitoba in Canada. The Balanced Bead Head pattern was developed before 2005 by Jerry McBride of Deer Lake, WA and published in the 2006 February Fly of the Month. Many times when successful lake anglers are asked “What-are-you-using?” The answer is “Balanced Leech”, “Balanced Damsel”, “Balanced etc.” At the Liar’s Club, a lunch gathering of fly anglers, fishing reports often contained “balanced” with some other description. They are so successful because the critters fish feed on, like damsels, leeches, etc., move in a horizontal fashion.

A new way of tying the balanced pattern was shown to us by Leon Buckles at the May 2013 meeting of the Inland Empire Fly Fishing Club. He learned about it from Bob Vanderwater in the Central Alberta Fly Tying Club, Canada. In many ways it is easier to tie than Jerry’s technique so I asked Leon to get permission from the Central Alberta Fly Tying Club to put it in the Fly of the Month. Now May, June and July are bad times to get information from fishermen even with modern high speed e-mail because they are off fishing. Vanderwater’s reply finally arrived in June.

The tying style came from Bob Morenski of the North Dakota (USA) gang.

Morenski was not available because he spends most of the fly fishing season on Manitoba lakes. Morenski published it on the website, <http://www.flippr.ca/bob/TYGerLeader.pdf>, and Vanderwater felt that Morenski would be pleased if it was also published in Fly of the Month. So here it is.

This tying style gives you three options for fishing. It can be suspended from a strike indicator like any other balanced pattern (see 2006 February FOM for fishing details). It can be tied to a leader and retrieved like a traditional leach or nymph. If you want to have a second fly it can be attached to the bottom “eye”.

Leon Buckles tied his version of the pattern at his home in Spokane, WA.

Materials list

Hook: Tiemco 5263or Mustad 9672 size 8 3XL

Bead: 5/32-inch, tungsten, different color bead depending on color of fly

Thread: UNI-Thread, 6/0 black

Wire “eyes”: Rio, Wire Bite, 30-pound

Tail: Marabou, usually black, but can be olive

Rib: Krystal flash, purple

Body: Any dubbing may be used, but Leon prefers Ice Dub, black, peacock, golden and olive colors.

Tying steps



Step 1

Smash barb and thread on bead with small hole toward eye. Start thread anyplace and wind back and forth to make a corrugated underbody. Stop the thread about the width of the bead behind the bead.



Step 2

Cut off a piece of Wire Bite with side cutters. Attach it to shank on tier's side. Leave space at back so you can fill it in with marabou tail. Fold wire back, secure lightly about two bead widths behind the bead and pull wire back so loop just touches the bead. Tie it down and clip off at same length as other leg secure both legs. (You may need to experiment a little to get a balance. Leon has tied so many that he puts things in the right places.)



Step 3

Pull up the wire loop with a finger nail, or as Leon does it with a bodkin. Treat it as a post and wrap thread around it.



Step 4

Turn the fly over. (A rotary vise is handy for this.) Put another wire loop on the bottom of the shank. Use the same technique as putting on the top loop. When Leon was demoing the pattern at our meeting he had preassembled the wire loops so he had neat U shaped wires. It looked neater, but the fish don't seem to care with lesser beauty. Everything is hidden by the body that comes next.



Step 5

Make sure the wires are tied in tightly. Turn the fly up right, and wind the thread to the rear. Tie in a bunch of black marabou. He uses black most of the time but sometimes he uses olive marabou.



Step 6

Tie on a piece of Purple Krystal flash. Use any dubbing you want. Leon likes Ice Dub: put a little dubbing wax on the thread, and touch the dubbing to the thread. Smash the dubbing down a little by rolling it between the thumb and first finger. Always roll dubbing in the same direction. Wrap the dubbed thread forward, crisscross around the wire loops and put plenty of dubbing between the loops and the bead to keep the bead from sliding back.



Step 7

Counter wind the rib and tie off behind the bead. Whip finish, trim thread and put a little head cement on the thread winds with a small tooth pick or bodkin. You can check the balance of the fly by hooking a dubbing twister or threading leader material through the top loop. Minor adjustments in balance can be made by bending the loop back or forth. If it is way out of balance, on the next fly move the Step 2 tie in point as needed.

Closing Comments

There has been some discussion about the hook point being up or down. Morenski's article has it up. This is an easy pattern to tie, so tie a bunch for fishing on your lakes or ponds. Use different colors of dubbing and beads. Leon tries to make the fly hang as horizontal as possible. However he has caught fish with flies that were as much as 30 degrees off horizontal. People have asked him if the wires slip out. He has not had a wire slip even with some very big fish. Keep the thread tight when you are securing the wires. Some people have experimented with monofilament loops. The jury is still out on that.

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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