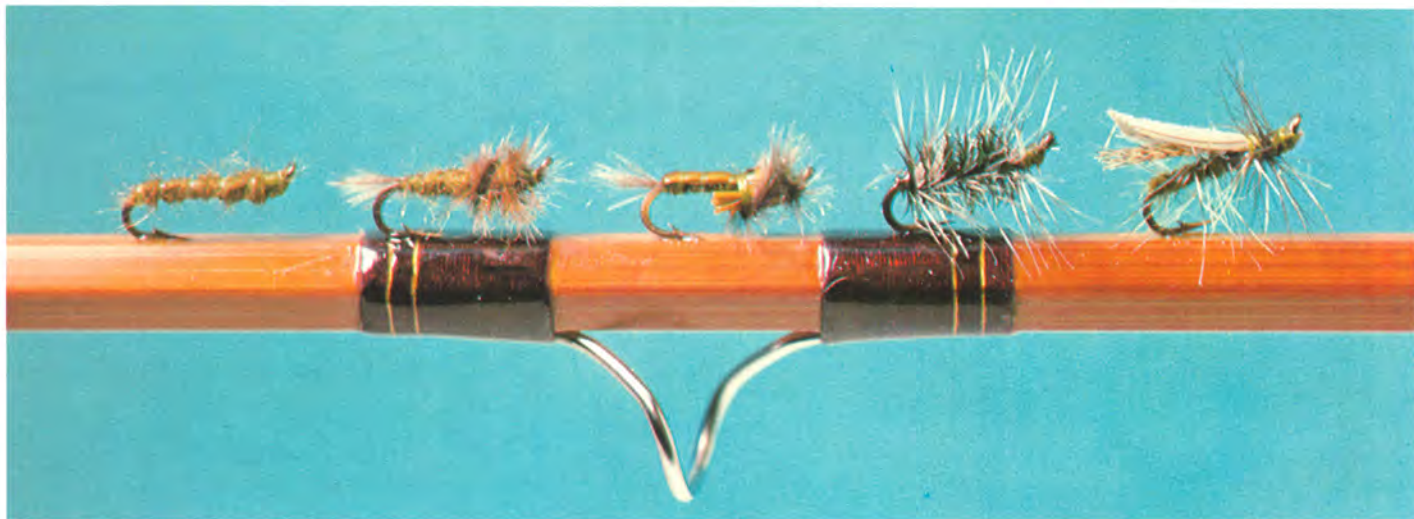




Some of Dave's favorite midge patterns, from left: larva; rising pupa; emerging pupa; Conover Midge; and Henryville Special. Photos and art by Dave Whitlock.

Ties for Midges

DAVE WHITLOCK

MIDGE IMITATIONS have traditionally been reduced versions of quill-bodied standard-hackled dry flies. Even these were often hard to come by commercially until about 10 years ago. Pupa and larva patterns have almost been non-existent except for those tied by a few entomology-wise anglers.

After I learned about the importance of pupa fishing, my next major enlightenment was that fur-bodied or deerhair-bodied pupae are much more effective than the hard quill-bodied types. In the *Fly-tyer's Almanac* (Crown), I devote a section to tying dubbed bodies for this type of midge, which I call the Four-phase Polymidge. I suggest you review this sec-

tion for a very simple and effective midge-tying technique.

Midge hooks are extremely important and once were quite hard to come by. Their size, design and use absolutely dictate that they be of high quality. Sizes 18-28 are the most useful in standard-length turned-up-eye models such as Mustad's 94842 or a straight-eye model such as the ringed-eye midge hooks available from Sam Melner's Fly Fisherman's Bookcase and Tackle Service.

Another excellent approach to midge hooks is to use the spider/variant extra-short-shank fine-wire models such as Mustad's 9523. By tying a reduced midge pattern on the shank's bend you can use a larger

hook size for small midges when you are consistently coping with larger fish.

Tying midge flies is not really difficult if you approach the task using some special aids. Use a vise with jaws that taper to a rather fine point. This will give you much more working room around the tiny hook. There are some good midge vises on the market if you find that your present vise jaws are too coarse.

By all means use a very bright tying light and some magnification aid, no matter how good your vision may be. Dexterity is greatly enhanced by increased sight capability. I have 20/20 vision, yet I never tie #18's and smaller without a Magnasighter

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Another first from The Fly Fisherman's Bookcase.

Legendary Catskill tyer Walt Dette has been providing ring eyes on his midges for many years, and his reasons for doing so are simple and sound. We are thankful to Walt for letting us in on his secret.



On hooks size 20 and smaller the eye of a down eye hook impairs the hook gap area (space between hook point and shank), sometimes virtually making a weedless type hook. The only way to provide hooking penetration was to offset the hook point so it wouldn't be in line with the eye.



On the other hand up eye hooks have plenty of clearance for the hook point, but when struck this hook tends to follow the direction of the tippet attachment, which is up. Instead of biting deeply into flesh, one often barely pricks the skin. A few seconds of action and your fish is gone.



A ring eye midge hook not only has hook point clearance, but when struck it buries fully into flesh as it follows the direction of the hook to tippet connection. The results are more fish hooked and landed with ring eye midge hooks.

Available in sizes 20, 22, 24, 26 and 28, this hook is exactly the same as Mustad 94840 except that it is ring eye.

Reg. Price 100 \$3.00 Your Price \$2.40
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Midge Ties...

or a Luxo Magnifying Lamp. It's just foolish to strain one's eyes on such small work when the task is so much easier with good lighting and magnification aids. Save your eyesight for bending those midges on a 7x tippet at dusk! Your flies will be a lot better, too.

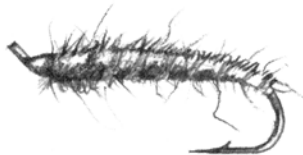
Also, try to use miniature tying tools more. These greatly offset the problem of large, roughened fingers. Use a very light bobbin loaded with 7/0 or smaller thread and be stingy as hell with the thread wraps. Use a minimum of head cement and be sure it is of thin consistency or you will mess up the delicate material fibers.

I greatly prefer beaver belly for dubbing the smallest flies. Use it straight for sizes 24-28 for the best results. Even the finest synthetics are not trouble-free when it comes to dubbing delicate midge bodies. Try to select feathers that have extremely delicate spines and herl. There is a great difference between tying with materials and tools gauged to micro-tying and just trying to tie midges with any old thing you might have.

The midge pupa has a thin open C-shaped abdomen and an enlarged, humped thorax. Wings and legs are encased and folded on the sides and beneath the thorax. Fuzzy structures on the posterior end of the abdomen and anterior end of the head and thorax are gills.

Usually the pupal thorax is a bit darker than the abdomen, but often the same color. While I am not sure of the importance of color, certainly trout can be impossibly selective as to fly size, and perhaps color, too. I always try to match all shapes, sizes and colors as closely as I can.

Here are five excellent midge-phase patterns.



LARVA

HOOK: Mustad 94842, #18-28.

RIB: Nymo size-A thread or fine gold wire.

THREAD: Danville's prewaxed Fly-

*** METZ brand Hybrid Rooster Necks ***
in five natural colors

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master, 7/0, match body color.

BODY: 50/50 blend of beaver belly and Flyrite.

HEAD: Same as body.

The most effective colors are light olive, olive, black, green, brown, red, and tan.



PUPA

(first stage—swimming or rising)

HOOK: Mustad 94842, #16-28.

WEIGHT: 4-6 turns of 1/2-amp lead fuse wire.

THREAD: Danville's prewaxed Fly-master, 7/0, match body color.

TAIL: One or two ostrich herl tips, very sparse and short (1/4-hook-shank-length).

ABDOMEN: 50/50 blend of beaver belly and either Flyrite or Poly II (see previous larva pattern for colors).

THORAX: Same dubbing blend but a bit darker color, plus one or two turns of natural gray ostrich herl.

HEAD: Same color as thorax.



PUPA

(emerging)

HOOK: Mustad 94842, #16-28.

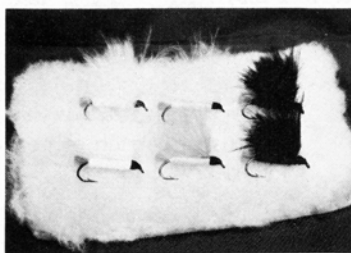
WEIGHT: None.

RIB: Very fine gold wire or tying thread.

THREAD: Danville's prewaxed Fly-master, 7/0, match body color.

TAIL: Tied very short (1/4-shank-length) of gray ostrich herl tip.

ABDOMEN: Deerhair laid along the shank and ribbed.



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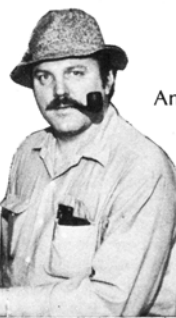


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Midge Ties...

THORAX: Deerhair as above and overwrapped with 2-3 turns of ostrich or peacock herl.

HEAD: Same color as body.

DEERHAIR Black, natural dun-brown,
COLORS: green, brown, olive or red.

This midge pattern is to be fished in the surface film, either greased or clean.

STILLBORN MIDGE

HOOK: Mustad 94842, #18-28.

THREAD: Danville's prewaxed Flymaster, 7/0, match body color.

PUPAL SHUCK: Ostrich herl or hen-hackle tip equal to hook-shank length.

BODY: 50/50 blend of beaver belly and either Flyrite or Poly II.

WINGS: Two white or dun hen-hackle tips.

HACKLE: One or two turns of cock hackle trimmed off top and bottom.

ADULT MIDGE NO. 1

HOOK: Mustad 94842, #18-28.

THREAD: Danville's prewaxed Flymaster, 7/0, match body color.

TAIL: None.

BODY: Peacock herl.

HACKLE: Grizzly, tied palmer.

ADULT MIDGE NO. 2 (Henryville Special)

HOOK: Mustad 94842, #18-28.

THREAD: Danville's prewaxed Flymaster, 7/0, match body color.

TAIL: None.

BODY: Floss or Poly II, palmered with grizzly hackle.

WING: Barred wood-duck flank or mallard wing-quill section.

HACKLE: Dun or dun-brown.



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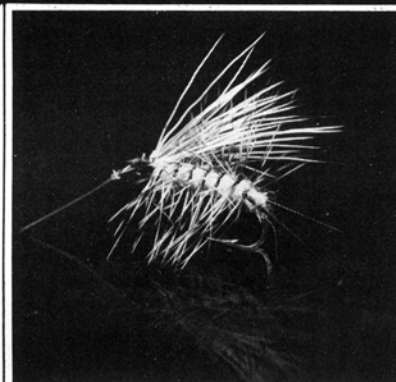


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