

Phil's Flybox

By Phil Rowley

The Black Sally

Throughout the open water season chironomids are the single most important food source for trout in productive stillwaters. From personal study and observation chironomid pupa make up to 50% of the trout's diet during the spring season. With over 2500 species in western North America chironomids offer a rich readily available food source. Although the heaviest hatches occur in the months immediately following ice off and turn over, chironomids are a year round food source that trout become accustomed to seeing and feeding upon. Like a bowl of potato chips or other snack at a party it seems that trout just can't resist chironomid pupa. It takes a number of pupa to make up a meal, so our odds of catching a trout increase accordingly. I have seen selective pupa feeding of epic proportions. Trout become so stuffed it seems inconceivable that they could swallow anymore.

Chironomid pupae have a number of key features for the fly fisher and tyer to be aware of. Beginning at the head all chironomid pupa have distinct white gills, larger species also possess fine posterior gills. The anorexic body of the pupa demands that successful patterns should be neat, slender and tapered ever so slightly, there is no room for fat. Perhaps the most critical feature is the reflective shine of the ascending pupa. Ascending pupa use trapped air and gases they absorb from the surrounding water to help with the emergence process both through the water column and at the surface. This air and gas shines so bright that it often obscures the true color of the pupa. But trout are not color blind and at times become focused upon a particular size or color. Black is probably the most common pupal color but others colors of note include brown, olive, and various shades of green. Any chironomid pattern that is skinny, bright and has distinctive white gills should be successful. Like many of my chironomid pupa patterns the Black Sally was designed with these key features in mind.

I weight 90% of my pupal patterns and I make good use of metal beads as they add flash and take no time to place on the hook, a nice alternative to using lead wire substitute. My favorite sizes are 1/8 of an inch for patterns size 10 or larger. For sizes 12 or smaller, I prefer 3/32 of an inch to keep things proportional. Depending upon the overall color scheme of the pattern I use black, gold and copper beads. Other successful bead alternatives include glass beads for added translucence and reduced weight or tungsten to plummet the pattern to the bottom. When fishing pupal patterns in 15 feet or more tungsten is tough to beat. To imitate the reflective body of the ascending pupa I favor Super Floss, Flashabou, Frostbite or Crystal Flash. Color is usually the deciding factor as each of these materials offers a different color range. To imitate the body segments I rib my pupal patterns using fine wire, Flashabou or Mylar. Again, color usually dictates my choice. Holographic materials have become a quick favorite of mine, especially silver and red. On the Black Sally the red Holographic Flashabou does a superb job imitating the red banding common to so many pupa. For added flash and durability I cover the bodies of my pupa patterns with two thin coats of either Sally Hansen's Hard as Nails nail polish or Angler's Choice Soft Body. Many synthetic materials suffer in the toughness department, especially after being ravaged by a number of fish. The Sally in the Black Sally is in reference to the finishing coats of bright nail polish I finish each fly with.

A floating line coupled with a leader three to four feet longer than the depth of water I am fishing performs the lion's share of my chironomid fishing. Depending upon conditions, and whether or not my kids are in the boat, I fish both with and without strike indicators. Strike indicators are an excellent method to accurately control the depth of any presentation, as depth in most instances is more important than size or color of the pattern. But given the choice I still enjoy the challenge of fishing without an indicator. Granted the takes are less obvious and balancing the sink rate of the fly with the speed of the presentation makes going "naked" a bit more difficult but there is just something about developing a sixth sense detecting the strike that I enjoy. Whatever method, keep the leader diameter skinny, so the pattern sinks quickly to the proper depth. Remember thick mono sinks slower than the skinny stuff.

THE BLACK SALLY

Hook:	Tiemco 2457 #8-#16
Thread:	Olive or Black
Rib:	Red Holographic Flashabou
Body:	Black Flashabou or Frostbite
Thorax:	Peacock Herl
Head:	Black Metal or Tungsten Bead
Gills:	White Sparkle Yarn

TYING INSTRUCTIONS

Step 1

Debarb the hook and slide a bead onto the shank. If possible place the narrow opening of the bead towards the head to reduce the risk of obscuring the hook eye. Attach the tying thread at the head of the fly. Be careful not to build up too much bulk.



Step 2

Tie in the Sparkle Yarn gills longer than necessary. Don't worry about the gill length, as these will be trimmed later. Cover the butts of the yarn in a neat tapered fashion so the bead can slide up and over the thread ramp. Whip finish and remove the tying thread.



Step 3

Slide the bead up against the hook eye. Reattach the tying thread behind the bead. Tie in the ribbing along the near side of the hook shank. Secure the rib down the shank well into the bend. Return the tying thread to the rear of the metal bead.



Step 4

Take two strands of black Flashabou and double them around the tying thread. Slide the Flashabou down the thread and secure into position directly behind the bead. Once tied in, the thread should still be hanging at the rear of the bead.



Step 5

Wind the Flashabou down the shank into the bend and back up to the tying thread and tie off. Forming a body in this manner makes for a neat and durable body.

**Step 6**

Counter wind the rib in open wraps over the body to the back of the bead. Tie off and trim the excess.

**Step 7**

Tie in two strands of peacock herl at the rear of the bead. Wind the herl two to three times around the hook to cover up the thread wraps. Tie off and trim the excess.

**Step 8**

Whip finish the fly directly behind the bead and remove the tying thread. Apply head cement on the back slope of the bead so it flows back into the peacock herl. Trim the gills so they are the same length as the bead. To provide a finishing touch of shine and durability coat the body of the fly with either Sally Hansen's Hard as Nails nail polish or Angler's Choice Soft Body material. Two thin coats are fine. Rotate the fly either by hand or motor to stop the coats from piling up on one side of the fly.



**Got a favorite pattern you would like to share with fellow club members? Please let me know and I will feature it in a future issue. -
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