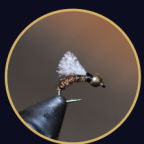


THE DARK SKIES FLY FISHING GUIDE TO **CONFIDENCE FLIES**

VOLUME 1: EURO NYMPHS



By Justin Leidy



**...And
More!!!**

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By Justin Leidy
Layout and Photos by Ralph Scherder



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Coudersport, PA

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Introduction

Every now and then, you meet fishermen you just know will help you improve your craft. Justin Leidy has been one of those people for me. Over the past year and a half or so since we met, he's become one of my best friends. He's generous, passionate about the outdoors, and knowledgeable about all types of wildlife. He's also one heck of a fly fisherman.

Over the past year, Justin has contributed several great articles to the website (www.darkskiesflyfishing.com) as well as demonstrated his skills in numerous videos on our YouTube channel. No matter what he's talking about, his excitement for the topic always shines through, as I think you'll see in the short little book that follows.

This idea came from a conversation Justin and I had about favorite fly patterns. It quickly became apparent that, although there was some overlap, we each also carried patterns that the other did not. In the past year and a half, we have introduced each other to new patterns and have had success with them. Some of the patterns that Justin introduced me to, in fact, have become my absolute go-to patterns in certain situations.

And maybe that's the real point of this little book, to learn what works for others and then adapt those patterns and techniques to use in your own fishing. If just one of these flies finds its way into your fly box and becomes a confidence pattern for you, too, then it will have been worth it.

Finally, to view demonstrations on tying many of these patterns, as well as how to use them, check out our YouTube channel at www.youtube.com/@darkskiesflyfishing. Fish on!

~Ralph Scherder
Dark Skies Fly Fishing



What are Confidence Flies?

Years ago, I read an article or book excerpt that defined confidence flies as the patterns anglers turned to that provided them assurance to catch fish in all conditions and varied water types. The article continued to explain that it is unlikely that these flies are superior at catching fish over other selections. The case likely remains that these patterns provide the angler with confidence that trout eat them, and as a result are fished with greater focus, attention, and skill. In short, we fish these patterns with greater confidence and better ability because we have greater faith that they catch fish all of the time.

I am guilty of using my confidence patterns upwards of 90% of my time spent on the water. When I begin a fishing session, one of these flies is likely attached to my tippet, and one of these likely remains throughout as I am probably catching fish on them. These confidence patterns are also the ones that I share and hand out on the water to friends and strangers.

Please do not consider this list as definitive, or finite, either. This is a continuously evolving resource. This list of flies is not chiseled into the ancient scrolls and stone tablets of the fly fishing volumes. You will likely not discover the Holy Grail of fishing flies here. That is a thing that does not even exist! Your confidence flies list can and should be different from mine. Instead, take and leave the patterns that you discover here as those that you might include in your fly boxes, and there's a very good chance that several of these already exist there. Spin a few of these simple bad boys up and give them a go. I'm guessing that you will catch some fish on them, too.



A confidence fly is any fly that an angler believes will increase their chances of catching fish.. Here, Justin Leidy shows off a beautiful wild brown caught on one of his personal confidence flies, a Killer Bug.

Finally, I am not the developer of these flies and have taken them from a variety of resources and/or fishing buddies. I have put my own spin on several of them, tying them with a slightly different technique than the original or using alternative materials. But, for all intended purposes, these flies are not my original creations. They are taken from others and exist elsewhere. A quick Google search will substantiate that fact. Some of these patterns are ancient dating back to Frank Sawyer and his Pheasant Tail Nymph. Others are relatively new to the scene such as the Eggstasy egg. But all of them are very effective at catching fish regularly when presented well.

#1 The Walt's Worm and Variations

Walt Young of Altoona, Pennsylvania, developed his worm for fishing the limestone spring creeks in the central part of our state. I have read that he originally created this pattern to imitate crane fly larvae in Spring Creek. These aquatic insect larvae are large grubs, resembling sausage stuffed cabbage and can be as big as a #8 or #10 hook. Smaller sizes imitate caddis larva and freshwater shrimp quite well, too. In the end, the silly thing simply looks buggy as hell, and the loosely dubbed body wavers and shimmies in the current.

Walt's original worm was light hare's mask dubbing wrapped around the hook in a loose noodle and picked out liberally with a bodkin. This original works very, very well



despite being as simple as a fly pattern can be. Mr. Young hit a walk-off homerun with this worm!

More recently, Sexy Walts have become more popular. These are essentially the same thing but include ribs, crystal flash, tinsel, tails, beads and hotspots. My version falls somewhere in between a Sexy Walt and the original pattern. I tie a standard dubbed Walt's Worm on a #14-18 jig hook with a black, silver or copper bead. I rib this with 6X mono and include a thread hotspot collar, most often light pink, orange or gray. In the smallest sizes, I use XS black or olive wire for the rib. I take a piece of Velcro to pick out the dubbing fibers to create lifelike action in the water.

My friend and fellow fly fisher, Ralph Scherder, ties this pattern with a purple, orange or deep green collar and Hareline rainbow dubbing and that works better for him. Recently, Ralph introduced me to Hareline Rainbow Scud Dub and has since given me a few packages in each shade. This stuff makes fantastic Walt's Worms and I now stock my boxes with this variant, too.

Because a Walt's Worm imitates everything and nothing at once, it's a great go-to pattern when nothing is happening at the stream. When asked by a fishing buddy, "Hey, what are you starting with today?" Eight out of ten times my response is, "A Walt's Worm," and often the pattern remains on my line throughout the entire session.

Fishing the famed and pressured limestone spring creeks in the central region of my home state, the Walt's Worm has produced fish in the net in greater numbers and more consistently than any other single fly pattern. This should not come as a surprise considering that these are the exact creeks for which Mr. Young first developed his remarkable fly pattern many years ago.

Fly Recipe

- Jig nymph hook of preference in #12-18
- Tungsten slotted bead in silver, copper or black
- 8/0 thread in the color to match hotspot collar of preference
- 6X tippet or black or olive Extra Small (XS) wire
- Body: Natural light, dark, or olive dyed hare's mask, or UV tan hare's mask dubbing

Step 1

After securing a slotted tungsten bead onto your hook of choice, tie in a strand of mono ribbing just above the bend.



Step 2

Create a dubbing noodle on the thread and wrap it up tight against the bead.



Step 3

Counter wrap the mono rib over the dubbing and whip finish. Pick out the stray hairs if you prefer patterns that look extra buggy!



#2 *The Killer Bug*

I discovered this archaic pattern in the book *Simple Flies* by Morgan Lyle. The story goes that Frank Sawyer, the same guy that developed the venerable Pheasant Tail Nymph, created this fly, too. Mr. Sawyer was the caretaker, or River Keeper as they are known in the United Kingdom, of the River Avon. One of his responsibilities was to eradicate the undesirable grayling from the watershed. He tied up the killer bug using readily available yarn, not coincidentally but aptly named for the job at hand, and proceeded to catch and kill every grayling in that stream. That was the end of those pesky grayling, foiled by Mr. Sawyer and his meddling Killer Bug! Or, so I have read.

Unlike Mr. Sawyer, I'm not much into killing grayling in exponential numbers, but I am into catching trout. And catching trout is what this fly does. Like Walt's Worm, this fly simply looks grubby. The original yarn used for this pattern was Chadwick's 477, which is hard to find and often very expensive. In recent years, Chris Stewart of Tenkara fame has renovated this pattern using Jamieson's Shetland



Spindrift Wool Yarn. The oyster-colored yarn has a pink sheen to it when saturated. It looks meaty and apparently delicious to trout because they readily eat this thing. The Killer Bug is a pattern that often saves the day for me. Unlike Walt's Worm, I rarely start a new fishing session with a Killer Bug. Instead, I reach into my fly box for one when I am having a tough day, when the fish are not cooperating and kicking my butt! More often than not, this fly change results in a few fish in the net to shake the skunk. Maybe I should learn from this fact and start a new session with a Killer Bug. This might result in more trout in my net more often.

And just when you thought tying up a Walt's Worm is the easiest pattern in the books, in comes the killer bug. Thread your bead onto the hook and create a thread base.

Add some wraps of lead wire if this is your preference. Tie in a length of oyster wool yarn just beyond the bend, wrap up to the bead, trap, trim and whip finish. That is all it takes to tie this nymph. One tip of note is when I'm wrapping the yarn, I roll it in my fingers to tighten the twist. This provides a slightly segmented look indicative of a grub, larvae or worm.



Fly Recipe

- Jig nymph hook of preference in #12-16
- Tungsten slotted bead in silver, copper or black
- 8/0 thread, tan or cream
- Body: Oyster Jamieson's Shetland Spindrift Wool Yarn

Tying Tips

After attaching the thread, tie in a length of Jamieson's Shetland Spindrift Wool Yarn with the butt end tight against the bead, and then wrap the thread back to the bend of the hook (top photo). This will lay down an even base so that there won't be any lumps near the butt end. Wrap the wool tight to the bead and whip finish (bottom photo). For a changeup, try this pattern in other colors, such as Purple Haze and Pink.



#3 Hare and Copper Variant

The basis for this nymph I discovered on the website Troutbitten. There, the Hare and Copper is named the Black and Tan and uses a brand of different dubbing to create the body and/or collar. Giving credit where credit is due, I took the pattern from the article I read and used materials that I already had on my fly tying bench.

Whether this is a pattern from Troutbitten or a slight variation from the far older Hare and Copper, I cannot answer. For the record, this is my go-to variation of the Hare's Ear Nymph. The origins of the Gold-Ribbed Hare's Ear Nymph date back to an English tier in the early 1900s.

Additionally, this Hare and Copper variant pattern fooled my personal best wild brown, an 18" bruiser (pictured below), on an undisclosed Class A wild trout stream. The Hare and Copper works best on wild trout because it is such a solid representation of many natural mayfly nymph species common in streams throughout the country.





The Hare and Copper Variant imitates a number of natural nymphs found in streams throughout the country. It's a confidence fly that works everywhere.

In the earliest part of a new fishing season, late February and March, fishing the Hare and Copper Variant is my starting fly of choice when targeting wild trout. As the season progresses, I often use it in a larger size #14 as my point fly. The Hare and Copper Variant in various sizes is also a great fly choice when mayfly nymphs are most active in the stream. I often nymph with this pattern during the peak of hatch season or when a hatch is happening but the fish have not keyed in on surface feeding quite yet.

The one thing that is clear on why this pattern catches fish is the slightly two-toned look of the abdomen and thorax. I have found through experience that flies that include color contrasts from dark to light or light to dark often outperform ones that are solid and uniform.

This pattern is not a flashy fly. As a matter of fact, I keep it sparse and drab on purpose to imitate a host of natural mayfly nymphs. There is no wing case, legs, or flash included in this nymph. When rock flipping and observing natural bugs, I have noticed that they are far more simpler in appearance compared to the sparkly, flashy patterns we often tie on our lines.

In a side-by-side comparison, if I had to choose the natural insect that the Hare and Copper Variant best imitates, I feel that it is a sulphur nymph, which is a clinger-style nymph that crawls over and under rocks and substrate. But it represents a big enough variety of insects to work anywhere and at any time of the year.

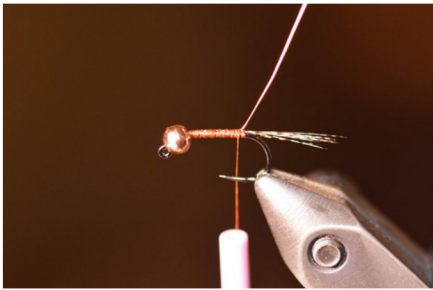
This is how I like to tie the Hare and Copper Variant:

Start by threading on your bead and laying down a thread base. A few wraps of lead bound tightly behind the bead is favorable for taper but not necessary. Tie in your tail fibers and copper wire at the bend. I prefer a dark CDL tail for this pattern because it is very fine and durable, but natural pheasant tail fibers and dark wood duck work very well, too. Dub a thin and sparse abdomen using the natural dark hare's ear about $\frac{2}{3}$ of the way up the shank creating a taper. Counter wrap the copper ribbing wire up the body and secure behind the bead. Next, and this is the most important part, include a very thin thorax using the tan UV or Ice Dub.

Keep this thin! We don't want to overdo any flash because I am convinced that wild fish are often spooked or turned off by too much bling-bling. The UV Hare's Ear Plus or Ice Dubbing create more of a collar than a thorax and just enough fish attracting sparkle. Finally, place a few tight turns of thread behind the bead to button things down and whip finish.

Fly Recipe

- Jig nymph hook of preference in #12-16
- Tungsten slotted bead in copper or black
- 8/0 thread, rusty brown
- Ribbing: XS to S copper wire depending on hook size
- Tail: Pheasant tail fibers, barred wood duck, or Coq De Leon (CDL)
- Body: Natural dark hare's ear dubbing
- Thorax/Collar: Hare's Ear Plus or UV Ice Dubbing in tan



Tying Tips

This versatile nymph is a must for anywhere trout are found. Be sure to carry it in a range of sizes with various bead sizes to cover a wide range of situations. In larger sizes, the Hare and Copper Variant can pass for a great March Brown Nymph. In smaller sizes, it can even be a Sulphur.

When tying this fly, take the dubbing up almost to the bead, but not snug. Leave just a tiny space for the thorax to prevent this pattern from getting too bulky. However, shaggy is good, and some tyers even pick out the dubbing to give it an even buggier appearance.

#4 The GAW

Green-Assed Walt's

As much as I am obsessed with the Walt's Worm, it is only fitting that a second variation makes my list of confidence nymphs. The Green-Assed-Walt's, GAW for short, is a Grannom caddis larva imitation. This pattern was first brought to my attention by my buddy, Grumpy Dave, on a well known freestone creek in Somerset County a few years ago.

Grumpy Dave is an exceptionally talented nymph fisherman that catches more fish than I do in a given session, but that day we were trading fish back and forth. Hammering them! I was using a pink collared Walt's Worm and asked him what he had on. Yelling downstream, he yammered, "A Green-Assed-Walt's!" At that time, I had no idea what the pattern was, so upon catching up with him, I asked him for one. After a bit of grumbling, he forked several over and I was first introduced to the GAW!



The GAW is a pattern that I believe was developed by George Daniel, the esteemed competition nymph fisherman from central Pennsylvania. He can be found on YouTube demonstrating how to tie his version, the Peeking Grannom Caddis.

The pattern is intended to be a Grannom cased caddis larva imitation, and it is a damn simple and effective one at that. Grannom cases look like miniature Washington Monuments, or obelisks if geometry class is your fancy, stuck all over the rocks in a stream bed. If you have fished any of the central Pennsylvania limestone spring creeks, then you have surely snagged these industrious little fellas, finding them stuck to the point of your nymph hook. Plucking one from a rock, you will see the bright green larva and his little black head peeking out of the base of the miniature Washington Monument he constructed. And that is the food source that the GAW imitates to near perfection.

This pattern works best in the early spring, from mid-April until about mid-May in Pennsylvania, when the grannoms are active and hatching. During this period of the springtime, if you are a betting person, take the odds to Vegas that I will likely be fishing a GAW.

In the past, I have avoided tying cased caddis imitations because they are remarkably complicated with a full grocery list of unnecessary and gaudy materials. That was the case until I discovered the GAW. If you can tie a Walt's Worm, then you can surely tie this pattern, too.

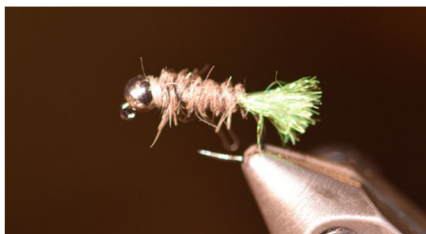
As all patterns in this article, begin by placing the bead on the hook, wrapping a few turns of lead and lashing it down with a thread base. For the GAW, I prefer a black beadhead but have had great success using silver and copper beads, too.

When tying this fly, here is the part where the magic happens, and the one part of this pattern that takes a bit of practice to get right. Take a very liberal clump of Hareline Caddis Green Ice Dub and roll it into a tight noodle

between your fingers. Fold this noodle in half and tie it in at the hook bend with the fold hanging off of the back. Take great care to lash down all of the fibers along the top of the hook shank. Next, trim the dubbing fibers off of the back just a bit beyond the hook bend. You have just created the peeking head of the cased Grannom caddis. From this point, simply finish the fly by tying a standard Walt's Worm with a mono or wire rib. Simplest cased caddis imitation in the history of fly tying, this I guarantee.

Fly Recipe

- Jig nymph hook of preference in #12-16
- Tungsten slotted bead in silver, copper or black
- 8/0 gray thread
- Ribbing: 6X tippet or black XS wire
- Tail: Hareline Ice Dub in Caddis Green
- Body: Natural dark hare's ear dubbing



Tying Tips

When creating the tail, use a pinch of dubbing and roll it into a noodle. Trim the tail to approximately one hook gap in length. If needed, trim the tail shorter after the fly is complete to create the perfect peeking caddis imitation.

#5 Shop Vac

Other than a standard Walt's, the Shop Vac has likely taken more small limestone spring creek fish for me than any other fly. This is a Western pattern from West Yellowstone, MT, also introduced to me by Grumpy Dave. He discovered this nymph on a fishing trip to the Madison River. Let me tell you, wild browns and native brookies in Pennsylvania eat this pattern as willingly as Madison River rainbows and browns do in Montana.

The Shop Vac is one of three Pheasant Tail Nymph variations on my list of confidence flies, yet it is the only emerger included. It is also the only pattern I regularly tie using a gold bead. I have had success fishing a Shop Vac as a nymph straight through a hatch. This is especially accurate when Blue Winged Olives (BWO) are coming off. Far and away, the best time to fish a Shop Vac is during BWO activity. Nevertheless, I have also had success fishing it before and after many other hatches and even when no hatch was scheduled to occur for the next five hundred years!



In the end, I feel that flies that incorporate pheasant tail fibers flat out catch fish. This natural material, with its shimmering, living micro-fibers, is the secret ingredient of the Shop Vac.

An important note of information is that I have never fished a Shop Vac as my point fly. I have always fished it as a tag in a tandem rig 15-20" up from the bottom. This makes sense as it is an emerger and trout are likely looking to eat it higher in the water column. This fly is an absolute killer on the larger freestone streams of northcentral Pennsylvania that are known for exceptional mayfly hatches.

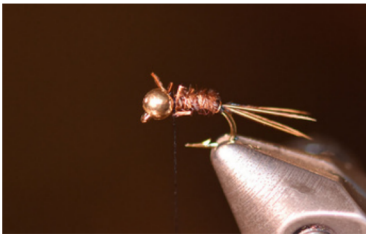
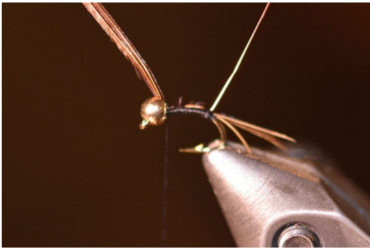
Place the bead onto the curved scud hook. Do not place any lead wraps this time because it will simply create too much bulk with the included wing bud. Tie in your pheasant tail fibers at the bend along with the copper wire. I like to clip off the delicate pheasant tail fiber tips. Using hackle pliers, gently wrap the fibers up to the bead, carefully twisting them as you go. Trap the pheasant tail with a few turns of thread. Next, counter-wrap the copper wire to create a more durable fly, and secure the wire behind the bead.

For the wing bud, clip off about a one-inch skein of Antron or whatever wing material you are using. I often split the skein into halves, but this is a judgment call. Lay it across the top of the hook shank with the middle right behind the bead. Take several tight wraps of thread around the Antron middle pulling straight down and straight up with pressure to lock it in. Pick up both halves of the wing material pulling them rearward while binding them down. I like to clip the wing so that it extends halfway down the back of the fly.

Finally, whip finish trying to keep the wraps as slender as possible behind the bead but enough to lock that wing in tight. This part can be tricky because it is easy to build up too much thread bulk behind the bead. With some practice, you will get it right almost every time as well. Almost.

Fly Recipe

- Heavy curved, short shank nymph hook in #16-18
- Round tungsten bead in gold or copper
- 8/0 brown thread
- Ribbing: XS copper wire
- Tail and Body: Natural pheasant tail fibers
- Wing bud: White or dun Zelon, Antron, poly yarn or Para-post material



Tying Tips

The key to tying a great Shop Vac is to keep it as sparse as possible. Use only a few fibers of pheasant tail for the tail and then only a few more for the body. In this sample, a 3/32 gold bead was used on a size 18 hook. The slightly oversized bead helps get this pattern down fast when using it alone or as a dropper or tag fly in a tandem rig.

#6 *Frenchie*

The Frenchie is the second Pheasant Tail Nymph knockoff on my list and the first Euro nymphing-specific pattern that I ever encountered. As a matter of fact, the Frenchie is so similar to Frank Sawyer's Pheasant Tail Nymph that only the addition of a hotspot and heavy weight really separates it from the original.

From what I can gather online, Lance Egan developed, or introduced this pattern, to North America. Egan is among the most renowned and accomplished American competitive fly fishermen and is a multi-time national champion and world championship medalist with Team USA. He is credited as the developer of the Frenchie, and inspiration for creating this fly came from observing the patterns that European competitors were fishing that included hotspots.

There are several qualities Egan took into account that cause the Frenchie to be so effective. First, the super slim profile coupled with a heavy tungsten bead helps this smallish fly reach the stream bottom quickly. Second, as discussed earlier, flies tied with pheasant tail flat out catch trout, period. Finally, the customizable hotspot provides that small, flashy element that grabs the attention of wild trout causing them to take it readily.

My Frenchies of preference call for natural pheasant tail bodies with either the original salmon pink or caddis green hotspot. My friend Ralph finds great success using Frenchies tied with hot pink and light olive collars. He also ties Frenchies with a white hotspot and uses these from mid-May to mid-June when the Cahills are active in northcentral Pennsylvania.

This past March, I nymphed a small Cameron County Class A tributary that is exclusively a native brookie fishery.

In two and a half hours, I landed nearly twenty fish on a #16 Frenchie, missing many more. Later that same spring, in early June, I was on a northwestern PA tailwater that is known for being a real “sumbitch” that does not give up trout easily. I ended up landing ten trout that day including a bruiser stocked rainbow and a number of small wild browns. All but one of the fish I caught ate a #16 Frenchie tied in the original style that was being fished as a tag fly.

Incidentally, the Frenchie might be the only pattern that I fish regularly as both a point and tag fly in a tandem rig. I also regularly fish a Frenchie by itself on a single fly setup. Versatility is what makes this fly pattern truly shine.

Another advantage of the Frenchie is that it is unequivocally customizable. The hotspot collar can be tied in a nearly unlimited host of colors, and the pheasant tail body can be customized to match the local insects on favorite waterways. For example, using dyed yellow or



The Frenchie can be tied in a number of variations. Try this pattern using Hareline UV Ice Dubbing in pink, shrimp, purple, orange, light olive, and pearl. Or, for a more subtle pattern, use regular hare's ear dubbing without the sparkle.

orange pheasant tail for the body might be a good choice to imitate sulphur nymphs. Deep olive or black dyed pheasant tail are likely choices for BWO nymphs. The choices and combinations are seemingly endless.

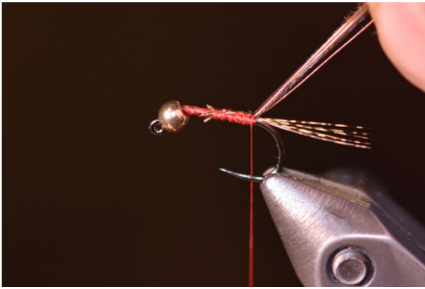
To spin up a Frenchie, place a slotted tungsten bead of color choice on the hook. If tying a large, #14 Frenchie, I add a few wraps of lead wire behind the bead so that I can use it as a heavier, anchor fly. However, for #16 and #18 flies, I omit the lead underbody because I want to keep the profile very slim and not create increased bulk. Build a thread base on the hook shank and begin by tying in 5 or 6 fibers of CDL for the tail. I have used pheasant tail fibers for the tail, too, with equal success. Next, tie in 3-8 pheasant fibers, depending on hook size, for the body and the XS wire rib. Tie in the pheasant tail by the tips, and if need be, clip off the brittle ends of the tips so that they don't break while wrapping the body.

Using hackle pliers, wrap the pheasant tail two-thirds up the hook shank, carefully twisting as you go to create a segmented look and increased durability. Counter wrap the wire, trap with thread, and trim. Build a narrow hotspot of bright dubbing in the color and brand of your choice and create a thread collar by whip finishing.



Fly Recipe

- Jig nymph hook in #14-18
- Slotted tungsten bead in copper, silver, gold or black
- 8/0 thread in orange, pink or red
- Tail: CDL or pheasant tail
- Body: Pheasant tail
- Ribbing: XS wire in color to match the bead
- Thorax/Collar: UV dubbing, Ice Dub, Senyo's or Arizona Synthetic for hotspot



Tying Tips

It's easy to make the Frenchie bulky, so be aware of how many pheasant tail fibers you use for the body. Try to keep the body slim.

This pattern can be tied on a jig nymph hook (pictured here) or it can be tied on a curved caddis hook in the same sizes. Both variations are equally effective.

Tie in a variety of sizes with different sized beads to cover any situation you might encounter. The Frenchie is a true confidence pattern that works everywhere!

#7 Green Weenie

Summertime wild browns love eating the Green Weenie. I will never, ever be caught dead on a Class A brown trout stream in July, August, and September without a dubious quantity of Green Weenies in my fly box. In fact, both limestone and freestone wild browns crush the Green Weenie in the summertime when fished in shallow riffles, bank water, and small pockets.

The Green Weenie is a Pennsylvania original. I have read that it was developed by two men, Ken Igo and Russ Mowry, to fish Loyalhanna Creek in Westmoreland County many years ago.

If you are deeply troubled by fishing bright green string on a hook named the Green Weenie, then by all means refer to it as a sunken inchworm. This might make you feel better about this fly. For me, it's a Green Weenie, all day, every day.



I remember reading a short anecdote years ago about a wealthy Pennsylvania fly angler that booked a trip to catch challenging, monster wild brown trout in New Zealand. As the story was told, the guide he hired just could not put the man on fish and they threw everything but the kitchen sink at them that day. The Pennsylvanian, not to be bested by foolish New Zealand trout, suggested that he try one of his local favorite patterns from “The States.” He commenced to tie on a Green Weenie, to the dismay and dislike of the guide, as I can imagine, and saved the day by landing multiple New Zealand brutes.

Whether this story is legend or fact, I cannot say. But, as a proud Pennsylvanian, I like this story so I’m sticking to it! I like the Green Weenie a lot, too, even though I ignored fishing it for years.

I tie my Green Weenies very simply by leaving off that loop tail that I see on the commercial versions. If you like the tail and want to make a simple pattern a bit more complicated, then by all means tie it in. I will always omit it.

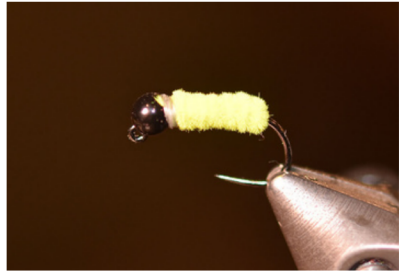
Thread an oversized black bead onto your nymph hook of choice. Create a very even thread underbody to the hook bend. Strip off the fuzz at the tip of the Vernille and tie in the exposed thread core. Spiral wrap the Vernille all the way and tight against the bead, but do not overdo it by creating an overlap and bulge. Vernille is very good at slipping out from under anchor wraps, so trap the pesky material with tight thread wraps pulling straight up and straight down. Anchor this in place by wrapping in between the Vernille tag and bead. Create a collar of several tight whip finishes. There is nothing more to tying the Green Weenie.

Fly Recipe

- Scud nymph hook in #14, standard nymph hook in #16 or jig nymph hook in #14-16
- Round or slotted tungsten bead in black
- 6/0 thread in chartreuse or pale yellow
- Body: Chartreuse Vernille Ultra Chenille

Tying Tips

As with the Killer Bug, tie in the Ultra Chenille at the base of the bead and work the thread back to the bend of the hook. This will provide a smooth underbody so that the chenille lays flat (no lumps near the butt) and allows you to make tight touching wraps, which will make the fly more durable.



#8 Eggstasy Egg (a.k.a. “Pink Egg Thing”)

The pink egg thing is the only next-hottest-thing fly on this list, and the fly that has been around for the least amount of time. Based on my knowledge, it is newer but falls in the same category as “junk flies” like the Mop and the Squirmy Wormy, both of which I have tied and fished. Mop flies and Squirmy Wormies catch fish, but not nearly to the degree that the pink egg thing does for me.

Walking into Orvis Pittsburgh, a store that I dangerously pass every day on my way to and from the school where I teach, two winters ago I peered into their display of “Staff Favorite Flies.” In all of the featured assortments, I spied peculiar pink and yellow fuzz balls with obnoxiously-colored bead heads. Motioning to a salesperson to come my way, pointing right at the pink and yellow fuzz balls, I called to him, “Hey, what in the hell are these things?”

He leaned in close, lowered his voice to just above an audible whisper and responded, “You like what you see? You want some of that? I can get it for you. It is called Eggstasy.”

No longer sure if we were discussing fishing flies or in the midst of a shady deal, I followed the associate over to a rack of fly tying materials and received a package each of pink and cheese Eggstasy yarn.

For some reason, Pennsylvania’s stocked rainbow trout eat anything pink. And the more recently stocked they are, the easier they are fooled by pink flies. I cannot speak on behalf of stocked rainbows elsewhere, but our stocked rainbows love to eat pink things and the pink egg thing is the pink thing that seemingly outperforms all others.



After finishing tying my first Eggstasy Egg, I appropriately abbreviated “pink egg thing” to PET for short. I removed it from the fly tying vice and looked it over carefully. I thought to myself, “This is the most absurd, ridiculous abomination that I have ever tied.” At that point, in all fairness, I had never seen a Squirmy Wormy. Talking to myself, I continued, “No self respecting trout will ever eat this stupid thing! There is no way that this fly is ever going to work!”

Later that week, I took a handful of PETs to my local marginal stream that was recently stocked with trout. I proceeded to rail fish that day using only my PETs! I have watched stocked rainbows swim halfway across the entire stream to intercept a dead-drifted PET. Once, a few days after that same marginal stream was stocked, I caught upwards of 50-60 trout using it in a single session! I went through half a dozen of them that day because the fish’s teeth were tattering the thread and causing them to unravel. I do regularly catch stocked browns using the PET, and this past spring a strong, 14” Potter County wild brown devoured one, too. Do not discount the PET and reserve it only for stocked trout!

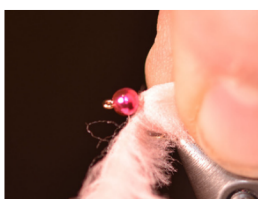
I turn to fish the PET in two circumstances. First, it is one of my top late winter and early spring flies. It might

actually work better for wild browns in the cheese color which is a light yellow. Second, the PET is my fly of choice when fishing exclusively for stocked early springtime trout. I'm not going to go into great detail or specifics, but the PET is so deadly on bruiser Keystone Select trout that it almost feels like cheating.

Tying this pattern is a snap, but the Eggstasy material takes a little getting used to working with. Place a pink bead on a #14 scud hook. I often over-bead my PETs 1-2X larger. For example, for a #14 PET, I will use a 3.2 or 3.8 mm tungsten bead. Lay down an even thread base and tie in a length of Eggstasy just around the bend ever so slightly. Wrap the yarn tightly around the hook, five or so turns, ending at the bead and raking the fibers back with your fingers as you go. Lash down the yarn, trim off the excess tag and whip finish. Done.

Fly Recipe

- **Heavy curved, short shank nymph hook in #12-14**
- **Round tungsten bead in light pink**
- **6/0 thread in pink or red**
- **Pink Eggstasy yarn**



Tying Tips

When attaching the Eggstasy material to the hook shank, pull off a few of the fibers to expose the cord (left photo). This will give you a solid anchor point so that the material won't spin on the hook once you begin to wrap it around the shank. As you wrap the material, stroke back the fibers (middle photo) until you reach the bead. Feel free to experiment with different colors of material and beads. They all work!

#9 Micro Mayfly

The Micro Mayfly, MMF, did not make my initial list of confidence flies. Nevertheless, it is just too effective to leave off, so I have included it as the plus one, bonus pattern. As with the Frenchie and Shop Vac, the MMF is one of my go to tag patterns. As a matter of fact, fishing the Micro Mayfly is identical to fishing the Shop Vac as both patterns excel in similar situations. I fish this fly all of the time and have had success catching native brookies, wild browns, and stocked trout with this pattern.

Incidentally, the MMF is my third and final favorite Pheasant Tail Nymph variation. Remember my mantra, flies tied with pheasant tail simply catch fish! The MMF is also the flashiest and most complicated selection I have



The Micro Mayfly is the most complicated pattern on this list of confidence flies, but it fills a niche that many of the others do not. This miniature Pheasant Tail Nymph variation proves its worth on pressured waters all over the country. Viewed from the side or from the top, this pattern just looks buggy!

included that hosts a longer list of materials. It includes tinsel, legs, and a wingcase, and these are fly parts I most often elect to leave off of my patterns. Because of this, it does require a bit of practice to keep the profile slim and anatomically correct. With all of these materials tied on such a tiny fly, it is easy to end up with a bulbous, crowded mess in the end. Discard your early attempts at tying this fly and with practice, you will select the right amounts of materials to get it just right.

The MMF is also a Western fly pattern introduced to me by Grumpy Dave and developed by famed tyer and fly fishing writer Mike Mercer. On Charlie's Fly Box, Charlie Craven writes, "The combination of a short hook, heavy bead head and slim profile create a fly that offers the right profile to mimic the naturals as well as sink like a bomb."

Allegedly, Mercer created the MMF while fishing the Madison River in Montana. He wanted to develop a mayfly nymph that would drop quickly in fast and heavy but shallow riffles, yet it would not continually hang up and snag. The MMF did the trick and it has been catching trout on the Madison and everywhere else ever since.

The description included will provide you a basis on how I tie this pattern. Because this pattern utilizes a number of materials, it can get bulky, which is why I don't add any lead wire for weight. I like this fly as spare as possible.

Thread an appropriately sized bead to a #16-18 scud hook and lay down a thin thread base to the point just around the bend. Tie in three pheasant tail fibers and a length of XS ribbing wire then return your thread back up the hook. Do not trim off the pheasant tail butt ends as these are wrapped for the body, too. Using hackle pliers, wrap the pheasant tail to about halfway up the short hook shank, trap and trim. Counter wrap your wire rib and secure behind the bead.

Select a length of tinsel and tie this in right in front of the pheasant tail abdomen. Select a clump of 6-8 pheasant tail fibers, tying them in so the tips are pulled forward to make

the wingcase at the same spot. Take great care to remain neat and not create a lot of bulk. It is so important to tie in the tinsel first. Otherwise, it will be under the wingcase! Yes, I know you are asking, and I have made this mistake many times and it is a pain in the rear to fix.

Next, build a round thorax using the Ice Dub or alternative dubbing of your choice. Pull the pheasant tail fiber tips over the top to construct the case and trap with a wrap or two behind the bead. Pull the tinsel over the wingcase and trap this at the same spot. Trim the tinsel but not the pheasant tail fibers.

This is when things can get really sloppy, out of sorts and too big so do not overdo the thread wraps. Split the pheasant tail tips in half and lash 3-4 on the far side and then the other 3-4 on the near side of the hook shank. Take a few thread wraps back and over them so they point rearward and lay on the sides of the fly to create the legs.

Take one or two tight wraps of thread behind the bead and whip finish to lock everything in place. Apply a tiny drop of head cement because there is so much going on at the head of this fly. Finish by trimming the legs so they stick out about ½ of the hook shank.

Fly Recipe

- **Heavy curved, short shank nymph hook in #16-18**
- **Round tungsten bead in copper, silver, gold or black**
- **8/0 thread in tan, olive or gray**
- **Tail: Pheasant tail fibers**
- **Body: Natural, black dyed or olive dyed pheasant tail**
- **Wingcase and legs: Pheasant tail**
- **Medium Mirage Opal Tinsel for the flash**
- **Ribbing: XS wire in color to match the bead**
- **Thorax/Collar: UV dubbing, Ice Dub, Senyo's or Arizona Synthetic in a color that contrasts with the pheasant tail abdomen**

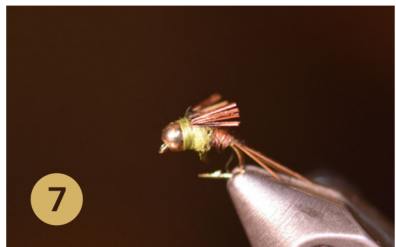
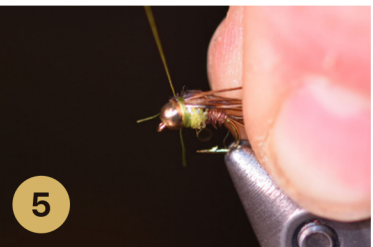
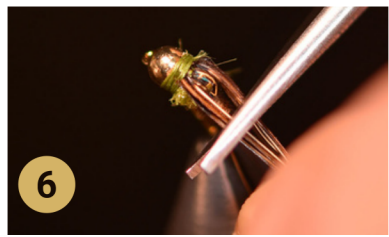
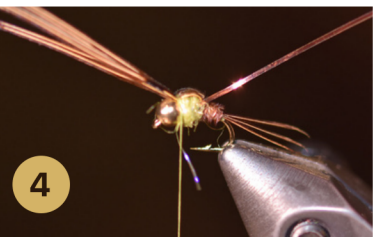
Tying Tips



Keep it as sparse as possible, beginning with the tail (1) and fibers used for the body (2). For the wing case, trim off the thicker butts of the pheasant fibers (3) can help create a slimmer profile.



The thorax (4) can be created with the color of dubbing of your choice, and then wrap the wing case over top, and then pull the opal tinsel over the wing case, and secure. Trim the tinsel and split the pheasant tail fibers (5), pulling them back toward the tail and securing with several wraps of thread. Trim the pheasant tail (6) about even with the barb of the hook, or where the barb would be if using a barbless hook. The finished product (7) is a killer pattern that will catch fish anywhere.



Conclusion

There it is! A detailed and comprehensive look at some of my favorite nymphs in my fly box. As explained, these are not the only nymphs that I fish, but I do fish one or more of these nine out of ten fishing sessions.

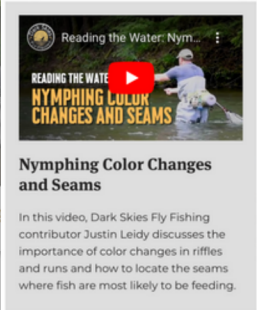
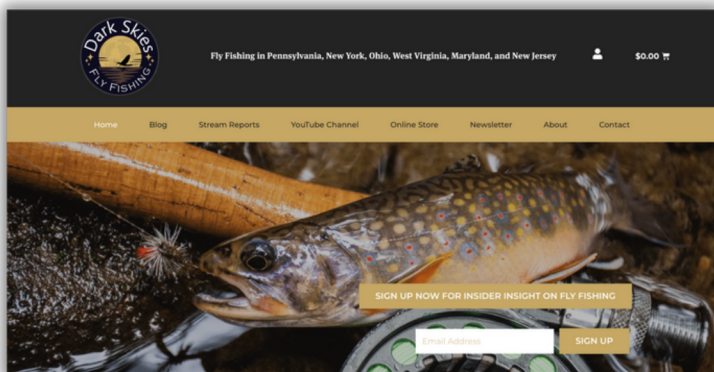
These flies do not produce equally well for me during every month of the year under all stream conditions. For example, the GAW works best when the grannoms are active around the second to third week of April in Pennsylvania. Later in the springtime into summer, The GAWs remain firmly anchored inside of my fly boxes. As late spring moves into summer, I reach for the Green Weenie. Late winter and early spring is when the Eggstasy Egg (my PET!) really shines. However, the ever-ready Walt's worm and killer bug seem to catch fish equally well all twelve months out of the year. Every day is Walt's Worm season!



Take what you have learned from my confidence patterns and include some of them in your fly boxes. I also suggest creating a list of your own confidence flies, too, and amending it regularly as things continually evolve and new fly patterns are discovered. Most importantly, have fun, be well, and by all means go fishing!



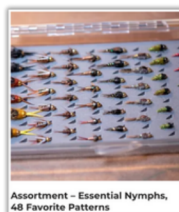
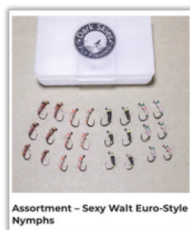
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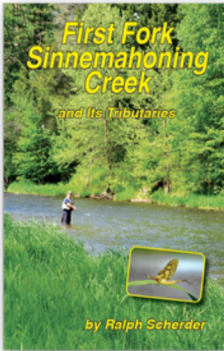
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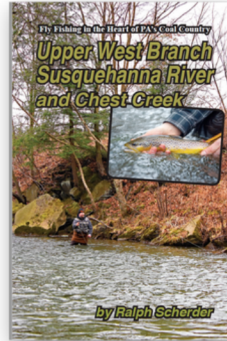


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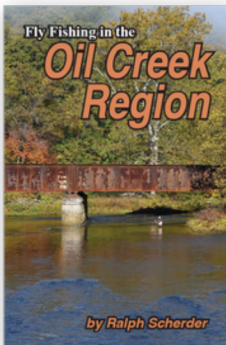
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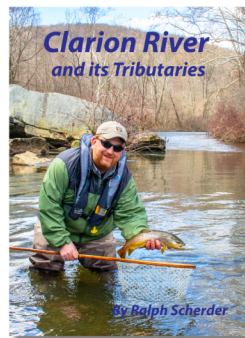
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In this book, learn about nine of our favorite Euro nymph patterns that we call our confidence flies, with tips on how and when to fish them as well as tie them.

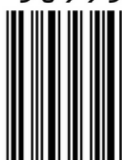
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