

Peacock Backed Woolly Buggers

By Mike Hogue

One of the most effective flies I have ever used and developed is the peacock backed woolly bugger. About 10 years ago I developed the peacock backed bugger while fishing on the White River in Arkansas. At the time, I was in search of the perfect woolly bugger and was looking for a way to improve the standard pattern which worked so well in the Sculpin rich tail waters. I have used this pattern with great success where ever I have fished. With this single fly I have caught trophy browns, rainbows, cutthroats, salmon, bass and panfish. The fly can be used as a crawfish imitation, Sculpin pattern and for large aquatic insects such as crane fly larva or hellgrammites.

My influences for this fly came from 2 sources: Ed Story's Crackle Back and Dave Whitlock's Flash-a-Bugger. Ed Story is the owner of Feathercraft in St. Louis, MO. Over the years that Ed has been in business, he has touted this pattern as one of the best to fish. The Crackle Back is tied with a furnace hackle, various shades of dubbing and peacock herl pulled across the back of the fly. Whitlock's Flash-a-Bugger had Flashabou in the tail, a peacock back and was tied on up eye salmon hooks.

When I was developing my pattern, I thought about these 2 flies and used ideas from each. The Crackle Back has typically been tied in smaller sizes and is often fished as a dry. It lacked a tail and the action I was seeking but I did like the different colors and contrast of that the hackle and peacock provided. The Flash-a-Bugger was tied on a salmon hook and most often was tied in white to imitate minnows which I didn't much care for. I did like the flash used in the tail and also the differences in the colors.

After several experiments, this fly evolved. With the large numbers of fish in the White, I fished many patterns and this particular one was chosen by the fish as their favorite. It takes the best ideas from both of these flies and the new combination is very effective. I like that it can be fished as many sorts of patterns and that it imitate both Sculpin and crawfish.

Pattern: Mike's Peacock Backed Woolly Bugger

Hook: Mustad 9672, Targus 5263 sizes 4-10

Thread: 6/0 Black

Tail: Bronze Flashabou over Strung Marabou or Woolly Bugger Marabou

Body: Variegated Medium Olive and Black Chenille

Rib: Oval Tinsel

Hackle: Olive dyed grizzly

Bead: 5/32" Gold Bead (size 8) , increase or decrease size for different hooks.

Locating Materials:

When I first discovered variegated chenille I went crazy tying every combination of colors I could find. This material is created by the Danville Chenille Company to have alternating bands of colors. I found that the Olive/Black is one of my favorites. For hackle I use wide webby saddle hackle. I prefer to use grizzly that is dyed olive and I look for feathers which are Christmas tree shaped and taper to a point. Soft feathers that contain a great deal of web give the fly great action. I also prefer using woolly bugger marabou which has a very life like quality to it. In a pinch, strung blood marabou can also be used as a substitute. For either types of marabou I look for material which has little or no stem and clean ends with no broken tips. Avoid marabou with ratty, broken ends or marabou which has tat stems.

Most hackle growers such as Whiting, Ewing or Keough offer dyed grizzly saddles. Some growers such as Ewing offer bleached grizzly dyed olive for a really interesting effect. Variegated chenille, Bugger Marabou and Bronze Flashabou are available from Hareline Dubbin or Wapsi Dealers. If you are unable to locate these specific materials, you may substitute standard olive chenille and omit the Flashabou.

Tying Steps:

- 1) Slip the gold bead over the hook. The larger hole should face the rear of the hook. If you have trouble sliding the hook over the point, smash the barb down.
- 2) Start thread and created a thread base. Tie in the tail such that the length of the tail is equal to the hook shank. Next select and clip the Flashabou to length. Use 7-10 strands of material, making it twice as long as the tail. Fold it in half and tie it in on top of the marabou, equal to the length of the tail. The small loop keeps the material from slipping and locks it down tight.
- 3) Select 4-5 peacock herls. I use eyed peacock sticks and pull the herl off the stem, leaving the rough edges exposed. Fold the herl in half and tie on top of the hook shank. If you make the herl a bit long than the tail, it will be easier to separate and fold when finishing the body.
- 3) Select a saddle hackle that is wide, webby and tapered to a point. Stroke the fibers of the fly down and tie the feather in by the tip. Tie in the rib.
- 4) Advance thread forward to the eye. Lay the chenille parallel to the hook shank and tie down, moving thread to the back of the hook. By tying the chenille in the front, it will make the body more even and consistent.
- 5) Move thread back to the eye of the hook. Wrap chenille forward and tie off. Wrap rib forward in even oval turns and tie off. Wrap hackle forward and tie off.
- 6) Run your finger over the top of the hackle, pulling and folding it to the sides. Pull herl over the back, compressing hackle and tie off at the behind the bead. Whip finish and that's it. This fly is a bit more complicated than the standard types of patterns. If done neatly, this will make a very attractive pattern that is beautiful and fishes very well.

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