

Woolly Bugger

By Todd A.Schotts

For this month's featured fly I decided to cast out a fly that is a flyby staple, available in many colors and versions, useful for panfish, bass, trout, or even steelhead. No other fly has been used far and wide in as many continents as this month's fly - the famed Woolly Bugger.

The history of its origin can be traced back to the Old English pattern the Woolly Worm, which is a descendant of the Old English pattern, the Soldier Palmer. The credit for this fly goes to Russell Blessing. He created the Woolly Bugger in Pennsylvania in the late 60's. As most patterns with origins as this, the real history became a nasty wind knot. It was said the Woolly Bugger is a variation of the Black Martinez, which was popularized in the west. Then there is the claim it was originally a bass imitation developed in the late 1800's in Missouri. For all the twist and curves of its history, the success and popularity of this fly cannot be denied. One thing is for sure, the family tree for the Woolly Bugger is very prestigious, proliferated with Old English ancestors like the "Soldier Palmer" and the "Woolly Worm."

What does this fly resemble? It depends on material and how you tie it; it could resemble leeches, crawfish, large nymphs, shrimp, baitfish, crabs, or even large terrestrials such as hoppers, crickets or caterpillars. If fishing it in freshwater for trout or other warm water species, use olive, brown and black. If fishing for Steelhead, Salmon or saltwater fish you can add brighter colors to entice these amazing species. Along with colors, adding beads, flash, lead or bead eyes, cones, or weight can change how this fly is fished and how it is to deceive the inhabitants of the watershed in which you fish.

The Woolly Bugger was the first fly we most likely tied when we took our first organized tying class. The techniques in tying the Woolly Bugger are the same steps that we use on other flies we tie. One thing I like to do is counter wrap the hackle and rib (if you use rib). This helps reinforce the material on the fly; it also keeps the rib visible, instead of burying into the body material of the fly. As mentioned above, there are so many other options that can be added to the base recipe of this fly. Another example is adding a cone or bead head, lead or bead eyes, and flash. If you want the fly to sink more, aside from using beads or cones, you can also add lead weight to the fly.

If you don't have the Woolly Bugger in your box in variable colors or sizes, you really should. If you are planning on tying with the kids with the Michigan Fly Fishing Club at the Ultimate Fishing Show in January or Outdoorama in February, then here is your pattern.

Until next month, tight lines, Todd.

Useful in many variations



HOOK: Streamer, Nymph, or Dry, size's 2 to 14

THREAD: 6/0 or 140 Denier (to match body)

TAIL: Marabou (black, brown, olive, green, or even bright colors)

HACKLE: Rooster Hackle (either match or contrast with body material/tail)

BODY: Chenille or Dubbing (match tail or mix up colors)

OPTIONS: Rib, Cone Head, Bead Head, Lead Eyes, Bead Eyes, and Flash