

Experimental Flies and Old Standby

Jack Harford
August 23, 2013



Jack Harford

Fly-fishing is a certifiable addiction. Not sure if it is being in nature, escaping from daily duties, or the thrill of catching a big fish. Sometimes it is the anticipation of catching a nice fish that can spur one on. Some fishermen say that the whole preparation for the trip, deciding where to go, researching all the possibilities within that area, studying the fish habits and hatch charts, figuring out the best way to get there, preparing all the gear, and tying flies for the big event, were as much fun as actually getting on the water and fishing it. Others want only to be on the water and will prepare only as much as absolutely necessary as to maximize the time on the water and learning from the fish. Living two blocks from a very fishable creek that sometimes will surrender a 15-18 inch Smallmouth Bass (and there are stories of bigger ones) is all I need to get motivated to try again and try something new.

The other day was an experimental time. Lately, friends have reported catching big smallies on this creek with soft plastics: worms, worms cut in half, crawfish, lizards, etc. They seem to be having great success with those lures, some even cast them with

fly rods and call it fly fishing and it may well be. Others are tossing them with spinning or bait casting rods and reels. The point is that they are catching fish and nice ones too, with pictures to prove it.

This brings up the question; what kind of fly could be tied that would perform, produce, and imitate the soft plastics they are using. The first attempt at this yesterday showed only mild success with a pattern that could be called a sili-bugger. The experiment used several color variations of a fly that has an underbody and tail of 8 to 10, more or less, sili-legs and an over body of chenille and hackle (wooly bugger style) all behind a bead head. Some of the color patterns were Chartreuse with chartreuse legs, black with black legs, white with white legs, olive with pumpkin legs, black with pumpkin legs, and olive with chartreuse legs. All except the black/black caught small fish, a couple of 8" and several smaller rock bass, green sunfish, bluegills and a 10" crappie. However, none were able to attract the big smallmouth bass.

After fishing several hours with the sili-buggers, it was the old reliable #6 horse fly in black and yellow that enticed a 16" SMB to swallow the fly and the fight was on. The fish jumped only once, but each time it came to the surface, it roiled the water and tried to shake the fly loose. More than once it seem like the gallant fish would break the line or throw the fly, but patiently it drew near and CPR applied. That is CRP as in Catch – Photo – Release. The fish lay still as it was put back into the creek and then when it had received enough oxygen from the water scuttled briskly back into the deeper pool. The tug on the line, the beauty of the creation, and the dignity of a mighty fish will only feed the piscatorial passion and fuel the motivation to get back to a stream as soon as possible.