

Fly of the month is Mike's Mohair Leech (submitted by John Soper)

Mike's Mohair Leech

I discovered this fly by accident one day when I substituted some olive mohair yarn in the place of olive chenille on a wooly bugger. I decided to omit the hackle entirely after I realized what a fuzzy body the mohair created. A few days later, this "simplified wooly bugger" proved deadly on the wild rainbows of Missouri's Crane Creek. Since then, I've enjoyed great success with this simple fly on all of Missouri's trout waters, throughout North America, and even on the challenging waters of New Zealand. Friends and guides around the world have all adopted this pattern as an indispensable part of their fly box.



"The Leech" is not a pretty fly, but there is no denying its fish catching appeal. It resembles a wide variety of trout foods besides leeches. Nevertheless, it's ugly like a leech, resembles one in shape, and no other name fits better. If you're a purist, don't bother to read any further...

Hook: Mustad 9672 or equivalent, size 8

Thread: Olive

Weight: 12 turns of .035" diameter lead wire

Tail: Olive marabou, tied thick, about shank length

Body: Olive Mohair yarn, tied fuzzy

The Leech is so simple that someone who has never tied a fly can produce an effective one on their first try. In New Zealand, Leeches tied on a 1X long size 10 nymph hook work well. Friends of mine often fish a black or brown "Leech Variant." I usually stick with the standard size 8 olive leech, unless conditions demand a smaller (or larger) fly.

A few points to remember when tying The Leech:

- * Make sure to tie a thick marabou tail using good quality marabou. "Wooly bugger" marabou works best because it has fairly thick fibers all the way to the tips. It is difficult to create a thick enough tail if your marabou has very thin tips.
- * The body must be very fuzzy. The completed fly should look shaggy, with a few mohair fibers long enough to reach the tip of the tail. Be careful to avoid binding down these long mohair fibers when you wrap the yarn. Tease the fibers away from the hook shank as you wrap, and you won't have to go back later to "tease-out" the body to make it fuzzy. You want a fly that has a "halo" of long mohair fibers trailing back along the body.
- * Make sure to use yarn that is olive throughout. Avoid those varieties marketed as "Leech Yarn" because they invariably have a core that is a different color, usually white. Also, most of the "mohair" I have seen sold in fly tying shops is very soft, and I believe it flattens-out too much when wet, causing the fly to lose its "halo." The best mohair is usually available only at specialty yarn stores where you must buy it by the skein. The mohair I use, in quantities to suit fly tiers, is available at Clearwater Fly Shop in Columbia, Missouri (877-392-3320 or e-mail them at: orders@clearwaterflyshop.com).

Normally, I fish this fly as I would fish a nymph: cast upstream and dead drift under a strike indicator. Be ready for a strike at anytime, but particularly at the end of the drift as the fly begins to drag. In ponds, I have found The Leech to be very effective when fished with a uniform-sink line and retrieved with short strips or a hand twist.

Mike Kruse, March 19,1999, All Rights Reserved

Fly Fishing the Williamson River
by
John R. Soper

When Russ Wright suggested a three-day trip to the Williamson River last year I had to back out after making a trip just weeks earlier to fly fish the Conejos River in southeastern Colorado with a buddy of many years, Dave Stephens, and learning that in a couple of weeks I would have to make a weeklong family-type trip to central California. So Russ and I postponed the Williamson River trip to May of this year.

The Williamson River twists and winds west to south for 75 miles after rising in central Klamath County along the north slope of Fuego Mountain in the Wimeema National Forest. Along the way it picks up water from Spring Creek and the Sprague River, flows under Highway 97, then empties into the north end of Upper Klamath Lake

The Memorial Day weekend weather was beautiful, lots of warm sun and just enough breeze to keep things pleasant. And, to make it even better, I am glad we finally made the trip, as I was able to bring the largest trout I have ever caught on a fly rod to the net. So please don't laugh when I tell you this 'Monster' trout was only a 15-inch, 3-pound rainbow. It is still the biggest, nicest fish, trout or any other, that I have ever caught and I will never forget it. You see, I have only been a fly fisherman for about two years and have had little opportunity to really get out there. Russ made that possible and I can never thank him enough for his help and kindness.

We used his drift boat, another first for me, as I have never been in a drift boat before. I was amazed at how nimble the rig was in the currents of the Williamson where the Sprague River flows into it just southwest of Chiloquin. The dual 35-pound lead anchors fore and aft controlled by Russ using a rope and pulley system allowed him to position the boat exactly where he wanted it so we were able to cover all the river we wanted during two 10-hour days of fishing. We arrived at our cabin on Agency Lake about 10:30 a.m. and Russ wanted to check out the Wood River nearby. Using one of several excellent county park boat launch ramps that give access to Klamath Lake, the largest lake completely enclosed within Oregon, we were soon in the Wood River. There we spent the rest of the day without a strike. I don't know where the fish were, but some locals as well as Russ believe it may have been a big mistake for state, federal and privately funded entities to spend nearly \$1 million to channel the river as they also drained the swampy marsh surrounding the stream, killing hundreds of acres of reeds, grasses and other water vegetation and habitat. They feel the damage, if not permanent, will take decades to self-correct and probably has ruined the fishery for the near future.

After a good night's sleep we put in the Williamson Saturday about five miles upstream from where the river flows under Highway 97 north of Klamath Falls and had a friend locate Russ' pickup and boat trailer downstream where we planned to take out at the end of our day-long run. With Russ manning the oars, we started fishing about a half-mile above that just below where the Sprague River flows into the Williamson.

While the Williamson is darkened to a tea color by tannin, the Sprague is silt laden and you can easily differentiate between the flows of the two rivers. Fishing with wet flies in the quality water area (artificial flies and lures only) was a must as there were no hatches underway and no fish feeding at the surface. In fact, in two 10-hour fishing days we only brought four fish to the boat. Russ had the biggest, a 17-inch, 3 1/2-pound rainbow and each of us on the second day caught a 12-inch trout, all on olive leeches or woolly buggers. Fishing mainly along the seam that developed where the Sprague River's water meets the Williamson River's flow, we were both using 6-weight gear for the wet flies and surface casting dries with 5-weight rods just because it was fun. I also was able to enjoy casting my little 3-weight that is a sheer delight to cast when I manage to do it right and the breeze was not too stiff.

All in all, between the two of us, I would estimate we hooked up with about 15 hits. Russ nearly boated a huge rainbow that shook off the barbless hook in the current. We estimated that several trout we saw jumping out of the water, probably trying to rid themselves of skin parasites, were in the 10-pound, 26-28 inch range. Most of those fishing the two days were on the Williamson were practicing catch and release protocols which, along with a goodly supply of food, probably accounts for there being such a healthy supply of big fighting trout.

The Williamson River runs about 50 feet across here we were fishing and ranges in depth to wading in water up to your knees in some shallow rapids to deep pools, many of them 18-20 feet in depth. An interesting sidelight to fishing the Williamson River where we were was that a main line of the Burlington, Northern and Santa Fe Railroad runs both freight and passenger trains along the eastern shore of the river at that point on it's main line stretching north from San Diego, California, to Vancouver, British Columbia, in Canada. We were able to enjoy big freight trains rumbling through the valley cut by the Williamson eons ago and also view small private airplanes taking off and landing at a small grass strip landing field that Russ and I christened "Chiloquin International Airport".

As for those trout, I was lucky in that the first fish I caught was also my biggest. That, for me, meant I didn't do the picture thing with the smaller, 12-inch, rainbow. Russ said that made me a big fish snob. Maybe so, but at least I felt good about not groping madly at some poor little rainbow that was only trying to survive the wet, ham handed, mauling of some otherworld giant from above the water's surface.

Also, I was lucky that Russ had been a professional fishing guide on the Williamson in the early 1990's and knew where most of the submerged rocks and logs were. He also had a seemingly inexhaustible supply of olive leeches and woolly buggers and was very helpful at getting my wet fly unstuck from many, but not all, of the underwater obstructions. I even brought up a small piece of very heavy lava rock from the bottom of the river that I hooked. It was a weird feeling, I could tell it wasn't a fish, but I didn't know what it was until I got it in the boat. Russ was about to throw it back in the water when I took it as a souvenir of our trip.

Now that I am back home, and my lava rock is resting comfortably atop my computer tower as I write this, I have begun tying mohair leeches in black brown and olive. I found an excellent pattern that even a novice tier such as myself can use to tie a credible leech in just a few minutes. The website is as follows: <http://missouritroutrout.com/mikesmohairleech.htm> and I guarantee you will be tying these little trout getters in no time at all. I was able to buy three skeins of mohair yard at a local yarn shop here in Coos Bay, Oregon, for \$39 total and, while the cost was a bit high, I hope I will be able to share the pain a bit with other tiers in our club by offering them 20 feet each of the three colors at \$1 a packet. It's sort of a mohair leech sampler and I can also put one out on our monthly club raffle table.

Years ago a fisherman complained to me that I had reported fishing was good at Alamogordo Lake in New Mexico but he hadn't caught anything. In response, I asked him if he hadn't enjoyed being out on the lake in New Mexico's beautiful summer sunshine. He allowed as he had enjoyed the fishing.

"Well, see," I replied. "I only said the fishing was good. I didn't say anything about the catching."

Now, more than 25 years later, I remembered that conversation and knew it also applied to fishing with Russ on the Williamson here in Oregon. Sure, the catching had not been the greatest. But boy, the fishing was great!

And I sure am looking forward to giving it another try.



2009 OUTING SCHEDULE

Saturday & Sunday July 11 & 12	Umpqua River, Tube-A-Rama	The biggest event of the year. Camping will be at the Umpqua River RV Park. Six site numbers 5 to 10 are reserved. Call 541-459-2665 to make reservations or email normsrv@gmail.com. Meet at RV park at 9:00 am for each day's float trip. Potluck dinner Saturday night at 6:00 pm at the pavilion.
Saturday & Sunday Sept. 12 / 13	Rogue River	Half Pounders! Potluck dinner Saturday at 1:00 pm with club providing & cooking the meat.
Sunday, October 11	Upper Empire Lake	This is the 2000 2lb. + "Trophy Trout" let's go get them! Plan to bring your lunch and have a great day.
Saturday, Nov. 7	Charleston Harbor, Rock Fish	The tides are so great on this day we just had to plan a trip going after Rock Fish again. Meet at 7:00 am at harbor. Make your own arrangements for a boat and fishing partner.

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Membership News

If any member of the club writes an article for the newsletter of 500 words or more, they will receive 6 free raffle tickets at the next membership meeting they attend after the article is published. The article can be about anything that would interest Fly Fishers, but needs to be original (not copied from another source). Send your article to Sandy at slundg3656@gmail.com for publication.

MEMBERSHIP DUES 2009

Annual Dues are \$20.00 within 50 Miles of Reedsport; \$10.00 if more than 50 miles

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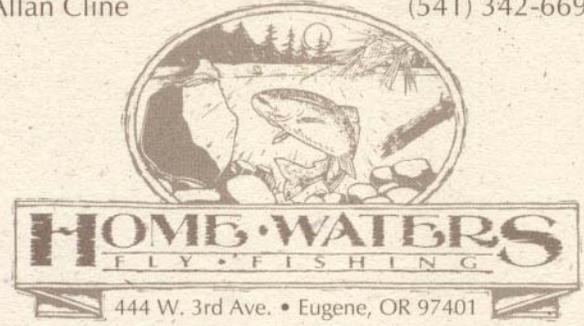
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