

Hickory, Table Rock, High Country Trout Unlimited December 2025 Newsletter



It's December, stocking is over until March, and the weather is getting colder. There will always be a few beautiful days to hit the stream, but many will be more comfortable at the fly tying desk.

This month we will dedicate the newsletter to making fly tying a bit easier and for those of you with a strong stomach, much less expensive. See the article on Frugal Fly Tying. And don't forget to check out this year's list of gifts for your fly fisher.

The next Tie-a-Thon will be held at Patterson School in January. If you have a little time on your hands, tie up some of those flies at your desk and bring them to the event. Again we will be tying Walt's Worm, Squirmy, Y2K, and Egg Fly.

HICKORY TU

No meeting in December. Please join us on January 16th for our next meeting. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

UPCOMING EVENTS

25th annual Virginia Fly Fishing & Wine Festival Jan 9-10 in Doswell, VA For details and to buy tickets visit [Virginia Fly Fishing & Wine Festival](#)

Live staking and Tree Planting Workday, Valle Crucis, Jan 19th. For details and location see [Workday Details](#)

Atlanta Fly Fishing Show Cancelled for 2026

TIE FOR A CAUSE

It has been a great year for the Tie-a-Thons at the Patterson school. We started the year with a program in January and February by tying flies for the national Tie-a-Thon organization that donates flies to organizations throughout the US. In April we and another tie-a-thon, donating to the Mayfly Project, in July for Project Healing Waters, and in October for Project Hope and Casting Carolinas. In all we tied several thousand flies for donations. We will start next year with a Tie-a-Thon on January 17th at Patterson from 9-3. With the cold weather between now and then it would be a great time to sit down at

your tying bench and tie up several flies in advance of the January event. The flies we tie are Walt's Worm, Squirmy Worm, Y2K, and the egg fly. [Walt's Worm](#), [Y2K](#), [Squirmy](#), [Egg Fly](#)

The second Tie-a-Thon will be February 21st at Patterson.

2026 Southeast Regional Rendezvous, March 13-15. YMCA Blue Ridge Assembly, Black Mountain, NC. They are now taking reservations for limited rooms at the conference. If you live within driving distance, sale of daily attendance at a modest fee will be available in the coming months. [2026 Southeast Regional Rendezvous](#)

CREEK BANK STABILIZATION

Hickory TU was fortunate this year to have a new member join with special talents. Andrew Bofto is a registered civil engineer who has made a career in stream restoration. In last month's newsletter we posted an article announcing that TU has made arrangements with growers in western North Carolina to provide free trees to groups to help with the restoration from the damage caused by Hurricane Helene last year.

Andrew became aware of this and decided he wanted to plan some bank stabilization to make use of these trees. In mid November he headed up to Wilson Creek to scout out areas where there was damage that needed to be repaired. He identified four areas to consider. Here is an example of what he discovered.



Identification of need is just the initial step. Before the activity can take place it is necessary to get agreement from the agency that owns the land and obtain permits or permission from any other agencies required. While we have a source of trees from TU we will also need to find a source of live stakes for some situation. The goal is to get all of this done for a planting in March.

You are receiving this newsletter either as a member or prospective member of the Blue Ridge Chapter of Trout Unlimited. If you do not wish to receive this newsletter, please respond by email to HkyNCTU@gmail.com and let us know.

We'd like to thank Andrew for taking on this effort. If you can help support him in this endeavor, please contact him at anbofto86@gmail.com.

Note: If your organization has an upcoming event and would like it in the newsletter, send it to HkyNCTU@gmail.org.

NCWRC FISHING CLASSES

12/3/2025 - Fly-fishing Basics: Wading Safety and Etiquette - Virtual
12/4/2025 - On the Water Fly-fishing Experience
12/6/2025 - Basic Fly-Casting Workshop - Lenoir
12/6/2025 - On the Water Fly-fishing Experience - Lenoir
12/10/2025 - Rod Building Primer - Virtual
12/13/2025 - Basic Rod Building
12/17/2025 - Fly-fishing Basics: How to Read a Trout Stream - Virtual
12/18/2025 - On the Water Fly-fishing Experience

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"Fly tying is like cooking. You're always adding something new."

.....Abimbola Joseph



THE FLY TYING GOLDEN RULES (DON'T MAKE SIMPLE MISTAKES)



If you're new to fly tying, you're probably feeling excited about tying your own flies. But there might also be some uncertainty about how to get started. Tying flies is rewarding and will save you money, so it's a great skill to have! There's

nothing like catching a fish with a fly you tied yourself! You don't need to feel overwhelmed by the prospect of fly tying. And even if you're an intermediate or advanced fly tyer, there's always something new to learn. That's why we've put together this detailed guide of the golden rules for fly tying! In this guide, you'll find all the tips you need to get started. We'll cover how to tie flies and become a better tyer. Plus, a few handy tricks for even the most advanced fly tyer to further hone your skills. So here we go!

GOLDEN RULE NUMBER ONE: WASH YOUR HANDS!



Our first rule seems simple enough, but it's essential to wash your hands before you start tying flies. There are two main reasons for this. Firstly, the natural oils off of your hands can discolor

the materials, especially if you're using flosses, light-colored threads, and things of that nature. It's such a shame to see

beautiful flies spoiled, especially light-colored flies. Secondly, washing your hands will help you grip materials better. You won't have greasy or slippery hands, so you can better grip on your hook, thread, and other essential components. It's also essential to wash your hands if you're using natural materials. That's because they can contain preservatives and dyes. So when you're done, be sure to wash your hands again. Another reason is that a lot of saltwater flies and trout flies are still tied using natural materials. You'll be using feathers, hairs, and things like hide. These materials can carry microbes, so you need to be very careful with hygiene and hand-washing. So that's rule number one. Always wash your hands before (and after) you tie flies! If you can remember this rule, you'll keep your materials in good condition, have a better grip, and create some great flies. Also, you won't waste money on wasted materials or unusable flies.

GOLDEN RULE NUMBER TWO: PAY ATTENTION TO PROPORTIONS



Our golden rule number two applies to all fly tyers, whether you're a beginner, intermediate, or advanced. Make sure that you pay real attention to proportions! This

is such an important factor, and here's why. You can always tell the flies of a really good tyer versus somebody who's new or is very haphazard. When you open the fly box of a good tyer, all the flies will look the same. Even if the patterns change, you'll see the same proportions. The length of the tail and body, the body thickness, and the wing length will all be in proportion. So if you want to have consistently great flies, you need to pay attention to your proportions. This rule doesn't mean that you can't make your own adjustments or adaptations. Your flies don't have to be an exact copy of what you have seen in a book or a video – you can still develop your own style. But be consistent and do it intentionally. For example, if somebody's not a very good tyer, you might find that all their Woolly Buggers gather all over the place. That's what you want to avoid because there's no intentionality in it – it's just haphazard and inconsistent. The easiest way to develop a sense of proportion is to use the hook. You can use the length of the shank, the overall length of the hook, and the width of the gap as handy measuring devices. Measure your materials against that. When you start to think about proportions and repeat the same proportions from fly to fly, all of a sudden, your flies will take on a much more professional appearance.

GOLDEN RULE NUMBER THREE: CHOOSING THE RIGHT FLY TO TIE



Rule #3 is a very important golden rule! One of the most common questions new fly tyers have is, 'Which fly should I tie?'

We recommend that if you're new to tying, you should go to your local fly shop or club. Then, make sure to ask, "What are three to five flies I need to tie to catch fish in my area?" The guys who work there are



experts, and they will know exactly what's working well and what's catching fish in the rivers nearby. This knowledge will help you identify the most effective flies for your local area. Then, limit yourself to that handful of flies and become an expert on those patterns. If you do this, two things will happen. Firstly, you'll learn the basic tying techniques and be-

come much more proficient as a tyer. Secondly, you'll start catching fish with your flies, which will increase your confidence in your work.

GOLDEN RULE NUMBER FOUR: ONE PATTERN AT A TIME



Often, a new fly tyer will tie one Woolly Bugger, and then they will want to move onto the next pattern. But instead, we recommend taking a limited number of patterns and repeating them until you get really

good at them. Practice, practice, practice. And only once you've mastered it should you add a new fly. Then, just add one pattern at a time. Don't open the magazine or a book and see 20 flies and say, "I want to learn how to tie all of them." We understand your enthusiasm and motivation! But if you want to become a proficient tyer, you need to add gradually. If you do this, it will reduce your frustration. Plus, it will also reduce the amount of material you're buying. If you use this method, you'll produce neat, professional-looking flies that produce out on the water. This is far better than being able to tie lots of patterns in a messy, ineffective way.



GOLDEN RULE NUMBER FIVE: ADD MATERIALS GRADUALLY

You don't need to have a vast range of tying supplies and ma-

terials. Instead, you'll probably discover that one or two spools of thread will cover all the patterns you want to tie. If you're tying trout flies, you'll be able to create dozens of flies with just a limited selection of hooks. This is true for saltwater flies, too. So, add to your materials gradually. We all get into new hobbies and new endeavors, and we buy a lot of stuff. But then a year later, you'll find yourself saying, "Why did I get this?" and "Why did I get that?" If you rush, you'll end up buying things that weren't necessary. You'll waste your cash, and you might even get overwhelmed by all the choices you have. But if you gradually add new patterns, you'll be getting materials that you actually need and will use. And you'll be tying flies to catch fish. 07 Thread tension is very important, so it's something that all fly tyers need to know about. If you're new to tying, there's a specific knot that can help you to maintain tension when you're tying a fly. It's called a half hitch.

GOLDEN RULE NUMBER SIX: ALWAYS PAY ATTENTION TO THREAD TENSION

The Half Hitch Knot After every time you apply a new material, you can do a half hitch knot quickly. It's possible to do with your fingers as all you're doing is crossing the thread over. The half hitch applies just enough knot tension that if you raise the bobbin or you break your thread, the entire fly won't blow apart. It will only unravel to the last half hitch knot. You can do this knot at each stage of tying a fly to maintain the tension. The half hitch also helps you avoid breaking thread, which can be incredibly frustrating for any fly tyer. A lot of beginning tyers tend to have too much thread between the hook and their bobbin. But the reality is that you only need a couple of inches of thread. This is something that will come with practice and experience. You may see references to a whip finish knot, which is another way to finish off the fly. You can also practice wrapping thread around the hook. It's possible to practice all of these techniques on just a bare hook – you don't necessarily have to be tying a fly. That's the quickest way to do it, and it's what we recommend. So grab a bare hook, look up some tutorials, and start practicing! After a few minutes, you'll be able to master any of these things. Then, once you become proficient at those techniques, you can start tying flies. One final golden rule is that flies that have great action catch more fish. So your flies need to look alive and have good motion in the water. The fish spend all day sorting between inorganic and organic stuff all day long, and so your flies have got to look like an insect or a minnow or a crustacean. They've got to have movement, or the fish won't be fooled and they just won't bite. If you're in really clear water in a shallow area, take a look in the river – you'll be amazed by the amount of stuff floating through the water. Trout are out there all day, sifting through things floating through the water. So, it's vital that your fly has the right silhouette and hopefully has the right action. That's why marabou is universally such a great material for fly tying, because it has such a convincing swimming action in the water. It makes that piece of floating matter look alive, rather than like a stick or a leaf. That lifelike swimming action is what triggers the strike. And that sums up our golden rules for fly tying! With these simple but handy tips in mind, you're sure to become an expert fly tyer in no time. And if you already enjoy making your own fly patterns, hopefully you've learned something new today, too. We all have room to improve! But the essential thing to keep in mind is to start slow and not overwhelm yourself with new knots or materials. Build up your skills gradually, and you'll have a great range of patterns under your belt in no time.

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OLD DOG, NEW TRICKS--MAYBE

by Jack Patterson

I am having second thoughts about the way that I have been tying parachute style dry flies. This has occurred to me because of some recent articles that I have read and videos that I have been watching. For many years, the way that I tied parachute style flies was to tie the poly wing on top and in line with the hook shank (See Fig 1). I then lift the wing, make a thread dam in front of the wing to make it upright, make thread wraps up and down the wing post, and trim the butt of the wing on a taper (See Fig 2). I then attach the hackle to the hook shank and up the posted wing. Next I tie in the tail and dub the body from the bend of the hook all the way to the hook eye. I wrap the hackle starting from the top of the posted part of the wing down to the dubbed body. I then pull the remaining hackle over the dubbing toward the hook eye and tie it off by whip finishing (See Fig 3). I don't know if there is a standard method for tying parachutes, but this is the way that I have always tied them. This method yields durable flies. The hackles do not unwind over the top of the wing post like some commercially tied flies do. So what is the problem?

Trimming the butt of the wing is the problem. The butt is bulky and covering it with dubbing later on in the process results in a bulky fly which is not a good imitation of a natural. To eliminate this, divide the poly wing lengthwise into halves or thirds, depending on the size of fly that you are tying. Place the middle of the wing on top of the hook shank so that it is across and perpendicular to the shank. Take an "x" wrap around the material and the hook shank (See Fig 4). Lift the wing sections upright, and post the wing in the typical manner (See Fig 5). Additional thread wraps around the wing base and the hook shank are recommended. What is obvious is that the wing sits neatly on top of the hook shank with nothing to trim. The rest of the tying process is like that described above with one exception. Rather than tying the fly off at the hook eye, whip finish the fly at the base of the hackle (See Fig 6).

This technique has been around for a while. A few years ago, I purchased some local patterns from a shop in Montana. After catching a few fish, the wing and the hackle rotated

around the hook shank. After deconstructing the fly with a razor blade, I found that the fly had been tied by the second method described above. The fly was poorly tied with minimum wraps to secure the wing to the hook shank. That is why I suggested additional wraps around the wing base and hook shank. This technique for attaching the wing does result in a fly with a slim profile that better imitates the naturals. At this point, I have not adopted this technique as the standard for my parachute flies, but as an "old dog" I am willing to try a "new trick". I have tied up a few and will try them out on my next outing.



Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5



Figure 6



Santa giving fish for Christmas

ADVICE FROM THE VISE

I was commissioned recently to tie some Grey Ghost Spey style flies. I had not tied these in years so I was really looking forward to revisiting this style. Digging into the supplies I found lots of things with McHardys of Carlisle labels, so it was a nice trip back to some of the patterns I tied in the UK. This fly was an American pattern first tied in Maine by Carrie Ste-



ven's who wanted a fly to imitate smelt that Salters- sea run brook trout - were feeding on.

Her version used two dun matched hackles for the top wing, for this order, I'm using marabou that gives a slight modern twist- and gives it great action in the water.

Chick asked me to keep up the Christmas fly theme , so as I tied these really ornate flies, I thought about what to do, and this passage came to mind from Dickens most famous ghost story:

"I am the Ghost of Christmas Present," said the Spirit. "Look upon me!"

Scrooge reverently did so. It was clothed in one simple deep green robe, or mantle, bordered with white fur.

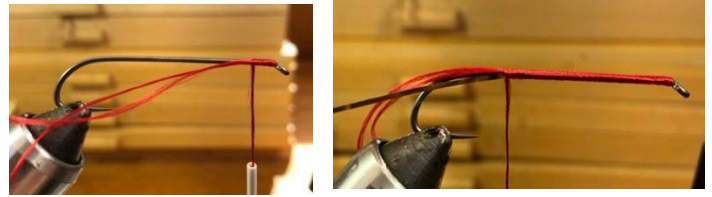
Sounds like a fly dressing to me! After a quick rummage through the thread and tinsel drawers, and, thus was born the Ghost of Christmas Present Spey Fly. All apologies to Ms. Stevens, and pray forgiveness, in keeping with the season.



This fly is big in comparison to what we normally use around here. This is a #4 7x long Mustad streamer hook. Pretty heavy wire, so no weight is added. The body is red floss, 2mm gold tinsel tag and rib. For the underwing, 4 matched peacock herls, white buck tail and golden pheasant body feathers in lieu of the original golden pheasant crest. The upper wing is a single marabou blood quill- in green olive. The shoulders are

matched silver pheasant body feathers and a jungle cock eye completes the look of this classic fly.

Start with floss the bobbin, which is a bit different, but laying down two layers, the bobbin makes this easier. Run the tag end to the bend to keep the body as level as possible.



About $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way back, tie in the tinsel. The piece should be 5 inches or so as you need to snug it up so give yourself



something to hold on to as you wrap. Trim the tag of the floss just in front of the point and take a few wraps back in line with the point.

Dress the hook back to the eye with a second set of touching turns. Whip finish the floss and start black tying thread from the eye rearward that will eventually form the head.

Wrap the tinsel to the bend and back again to form the tag,



and the snugly rib the fly body up to the eye and secure the tinsel with the tying thread.



Stack up 4 peacock herls so that the ends are even, pinch wrap those to begin the underwing under the eye with the ends lining up with the bend. Trim the butt ends.



Clip a small bunch of bucktail, comb out the fuzz and short fibers, and tie those in on top of the herl, so that the tips are a tad inside the bend. Tie those in at the back of the head length so you can compress the butt ends. Trim the butts on an angle, snugly wrap towards the eye to further form the head.



Take a golden pheasant body feather, or a crest if you have some. Stroke the fibers into a bunch and tie those in with the tips so they extend a tad behind the bucktail.

This completes the underwing, with 3 layers that are progressively shorter and give a nice tapered look. With each layer Wrap the head to the eye to really build that up evenly.



For the upper wing, find. Nice marabou feather that extends about half a shaft length beyond the bend.

Pinch wrap the feather, again, from the back of the head, trim the butts on a backwards angle and secure it with wraps to the eye, covering the marabou with thread wraps.



I think it looks like a great fly already, but adding the shoulder really puts the “ghost” into it.



Silver pheasant body feathers come strung, so some assessment is needed to find similar size and design.

Ultimately look for a feather that you can strip fibers back on to create a diamond shape that will be commensurate with the size of the fly. Once you find one, then look for a second to make up the other side.

Tie in on side and leave the stem, tie in the second side and use the stems to help with positioning. Once they are even snug wrap to the eye to keep them firmly in place.



Add the Jungle Cock Eye using same method to keep the stems on for alignment. Synthetic Jungle Cock is much cheaper alternative and still looks great.

Now that all components are in, take wraps to for. A smooth taper to the head. Once you have it nicely tapered, whip finish the head.



I am adding the red stripe that Carrie Stevens used to imitate the gills. This is red glo-brite floss, and I'm using the bobbin to get a nice couple wraps and a whip finish.



Several coats of thin UV resin or varnish finishes the glossy head and makes the fly really stand out.



I'm looking forward to swinging these on the Catawba and the New this coming year along with some other wet flies.

Maybe I'll get around to finishing that switch rod and really complete the big river package. Hope you find the time over the holidays to wet a line on the bright days, and spend some time at the vise on the others.

Please don't hesitate to contact me at Jacobsforkflytying@gmail.com with questions or to just talk tying. Please follow along on Instagram check out some current ties @ Jacobs Fork Fly Tying.

IMPROVING FLY TYING EFFICIENCY

By Bob Reece



Photo by Louis Cahill

Many beginner and novice tiers that I've talked to equate improved efficiency at the vise with rushing through the tying process.

While applying the techniques below can speed up pattern creation, that result is not their sole purpose. The main focus of these tips is to help tiers get the most out of whatever amount of time they do spend behind the vise.



Material Prep Work

Some patterns require very little in terms of prepping materials. Others, however, involve shaping foam bodies, knotting rubber legs, cutting wing cases or beading hooks. For these flies it is highly beneficial to prepare the materials in bulk before you start tying. When I tie foam terrestrials, I cut all of my foam bodies and the knot rubber legs that I might need. With bead head nymphs, I bead all hooks that I'll be using as well as cutting any strips of material that I'll be using for wing cases. If all of your materials are fully prepped before you start tying, you'll be able to create a larger number of flies in a shorter amount of time. Prepping your materials in mass also increases the consistency and subsequent quality of the bugs that you'll be offering up to your favorite fish.

Hook/Bead Storage

Hooks and beads can be two of the hardest materials to handle and keep track of on the surface of a tying table. Hooks of all sizes can easily be brushed under other materials or into the abyss of carpet fibers that sit below some of our tying platforms. Beads are also shifty and hard to handle once they leave the confines of their plastic packaging. To prevent these happenings, I store all of my beads and hooks in plastic



compartmented organizers like the one in the picture above. The clip down lids of these containers ensure that nothing escapes. Each compartment also has a curved bottom which makes it easy to retrieve the desired items. The containers that I use can be purchased in the sewing section of Walmart for less than two dollars apiece.

Pattern Material Kits

How materials are stored matters in terms of efficiency. I use plastic organizers, like the one pictured above, to create material kits for all of the patterns that I tie. Always knowing where specific ingredients are saves a tier the time of searching through bins, drawers and baskets. This type of setup also keeps things clean. When you've finished the desired number of patterns, the materials can be quickly returned to the plastic organizer. This eliminates a desk top covered in packets of materials. Best of all these organizers are cheap. I purchased the plastic organizers that I use for just under four dollars apiece in my local Walmart sewing section.

Life can be a busy and chaotic process from one day to the next. Free time for fly creation is often difficult to find. While these efficient techniques can increase the swiftness of wrapping up a bug, they can also help make the most of your relaxation time at the tying table.

Bob Reece

Gink & Gasoline

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ALICE'S ANGLE: DECEMBER

By: Alice Tesar



Photo by Louis Cahill

December, the mountain slopes are open to skiers and the rivers are practically void of anglers.

Not only is hitting the river an excuse to escape holiday guests but it can also be quite productive if you're willing to endure the cold factor. If you know me, you know I'm a nymphing fool. Streamers and dries are exciting but mastering a nymph rig that catches trout with each presentation feels invincible. Most mountain town rivers are running low and uber-clear right now. Furthermore, blue skies and snowy banks make your shadow and own presence on the water louder than ever. To avoid spooking more fish I recommend wearing muted colors and limiting your false casts, I even let my drifts go longer in an effort to slow down my above water activity.

Regardless of spooking easily, the trout is at its laziest in cold water. They are lethargic and prefer to place themselves where currents are easy, and the conveyor belt of tiny bites is steady. Midges are my constant this time of year- black beauties, mercury midges, and a biot midge if you find the trout feeding closer to the surface. Darker colors over bright and



flashy. Pair the midge with a black or dark brown stonefly. A small stonefly, 16 or 14, seems to work better than something larger.

My final tip, that I repeat often is: change your depth before you change your fly.

Add enough weight to find the bottom of the river you're fishing and work up the water column by removing weight until you find where trout are eating. In addition, it is crucial this time of year to set the hook at the smallest pause of your indicator.



As I've already mentioned, the trout are slow right now, so they aren't 'lunging' for midges but rather sipping from the train of food passing by that your imitation is mixed up in.

Enjoy the cold weather, avoid the crowds at the slopes, and catch some trout.

Alice Tesar

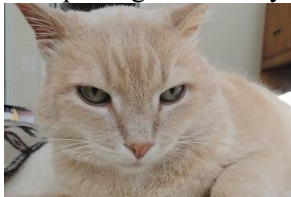
Alice guides for [Steamboat Flyfisher](#) in Steamboat Springs CO.

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FRUGAL FLY TYING

All those feathers and furs you use to tie your flies can add up to a lot of money. But for the frugal fly tyer there are ways to dramatically reduce the cost. It just takes a little more effort than pulling that money out of your wallet.



One of the most productive flies in my box is one I call The Buffy Boy, which I have written about earlier in a newsletter. We had a buffy colored cat with moderately long hair that needed frequent brushing.

Over time I had accumulated a lot of fuzzy under fur so I tried it out as a dubbing. I tied it up into a fly that is similar to the Walt's Worm that we've been tying at the Tie-a-Thons. The first time I tried it out on the river we caught eight trout in the first fifteen minutes. Buffy passed a while ago and I now have a gray short haired cat. I still get some underfur, but much less than buffy. It matches the



gray Walts we've been tying so I did a few with it. Can you guess which one of the three is the cats fur?

My sister raises goats and sent me a packet of fur she had combed out. It is a great dubbing, but contains a lot of long hairs in the mixture that you need to pick out. It also had a bit of an odor to it that wasn't very pleasant. I suggest that if you have a friend who raises goats, tell them to give it a bath and then comb out some dubbing for you.

An other way to get some material is from dead birds. When I was young and foolish I shot a bluejay to make fly wings from the white tips of the feathers. I was nearly disowned by my grandfather. But now my only source of bird feathers are from the occasional bird that dies from flying into a window or from our darn cat that was born feral and still thinks he has to kill them for dinner.

The next method takes a strong stomach and some effort, but is perhaps the best way to get some really good materials: Road Kill. Perhaps the finest dubbing you can buy is from a possum. They are a frequent thing lying dead on our roads. The belly fur makes the best dubbing. Also on the roads you often see squirrels and the tail makes great fur and the occasional rabbit. From the rabbit you use the mask to tie the hares ear fly. And a lifetime supply of material can come from that dead deer you find along the road. The tail fur is a major thing in tying and the fur from the hide is used for a lot of flies. Check on YouTube and you can find how to treat these materials. You'll also find ways to bleach and die the deer tails and fur for more colors.



And if you happen to be a hunter, you may never need to buy anything but thread and hooks. Bird feathers from pheasant, quail, and ducks are great. And many other materials come from deer, rabbits, probably even a bear.

So if the bills for your tying materials are starting to stack up, look to the options above and with some imagination you may find even more ways to stock that tying desk.

DON'T GO FISHING WITHOUT YOUR BULLETS

by Louis Cahill



Photo by Louis Cahill

Air rifle pellets make cheap and effective weights for fly-fishing.

The thing I love about fly fishing is, there is always something to learn. I would have never thought of this simple fly fishing life-hack if I hadn't fished in Argentina. Imported fishing gear is crazy expensive in many places overseas. The idea, that started as a money saver, actually has some performance benefits as well.



The idea is simple. Use the needle on your nippers to punch a hole in the nose of an air rifle pellet, then slip your leader through and retie. There is no chance of the weight falling off, or damaging your leader, like split shot can. Lots of anglers do this with cone heads, made for fly tying, but pellets are a fraction of the cost and work just as well. Personally, I like the idea of using lead and knowing it isn't going to fall off in the river. You can use the weight directly on the nose of the fly, with streamers for example, or place it above a blood knot anywhere on your leader. You can even use several at different points on your leader to sink the heavy butt section, which is effective for deep-water nymphing. You can use .22 cal for heavy weight or .177 cal for lighter weight.



Pellets have gotten fancy since I was a kid. There are a lot of different types on the market now. I feel like the closer you get to the old-school pellets, the easier they are to work with. Some of the fancier new styles might require that you drill holes ahead of time. If you experiment, you'll quickly find what works best for you. I used pellets all week, while fishing streamers on high water. It was very effective and I never lost a pellet. Give it a try next time you need to get your flies down deep. You'll save some money and you might find you like it better than split shot. I did.

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I started out thinking of America as highways and state lines. As I got to know it better, I began to think of it as rivers. Most of what I love about the country is a gift of the rivers. . . America is a great story, and there is a river on every page of it. — On the Road With Charles Kuralt

KEEP YOUR FISH IN THE WATER

When it's freezing weather, it's important to not take fish out of water. Fish are sensitive to changes in water temperature and can suffer from hypothermia if exposed to cold water. Even a few degrees difference can sometimes kill them. Fish are cold-blooded and do not have a way to warm themselves up, making them vulnerable to cold water conditions.

To ensure the survival of fish during freezing weather, it is recommended to leave them in the water. Fish have developed

various adaptations to survive in cold water, such as reducing their activity levels and seeking out warmer areas. However, if fish are exposed to cold air, they can suffer from hypothermia and may not survive.

In summary, it is best to leave fish in the water during freezing weather to protect them from hypothermia and ensure their survival.

25 BEST STOCKING STUFFERS FOR 2025

Running a little short of space this month so here are links to the top stocking stuffers for this year. Make your fly fisher happy with a full stocking.

Table Of Contents	
#1. Nippers	#14. Fishing Boot Laces
#2. TyRite®	#15. Rod Holder
#3. Quick-Seine®	#16. Leader Straightener
#4. Drink Holster	#17. Coffee Mug
#5. Net Holster	#18. Half Finger Gloves
#6. Tippet Spools	#19. Taco Bag
#7. Tippet Holder	#20. Waterproof Wader Pouch
#8. Leaders	#21. Pocket Knife
#9. Fly Box	#22. Fly Tying Kit
#10. Expertly-Picked Fly Selection	#23. Bench Light
#11. Forceps	#24. Travel Humidor
#12. Amadou Patch	#25. Gift Card
#13. Lanyard	



Have a Very Merry Christmas and don't forget to tie some flies for that next Tie-a-Thon. Here are links to tying those flies. [Walt's Worm](#), [Y2K](#), [Squirmy](#), [Egg Fly](#)

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