

Drag Queen

By Beth Jappay



This is a modification of the Phil Rowley pattern in my article. It is very buoyant. This is the first pattern I have tied that spins together a dubbing loop and chenille, and this results in an interesting reflective depth and texture. I am looking forward to experimenting with different chenille and colors of dubbing. His pattern calls for a preformed foam dragonfly body and I have substituted 2 cut pieces of 2mm foam. I have also added a wing case of peacock herl, an idea I derived from Hal Janssen's book.

Materials list

Hook: Daiichi 1760 #6 (alternatives: Daiichi 1730 and sizes #4 to #8)

Thread: UTC Ultrathread 140 Denier (Olive)

Eyes and underbody: 2mm olive sheet foam

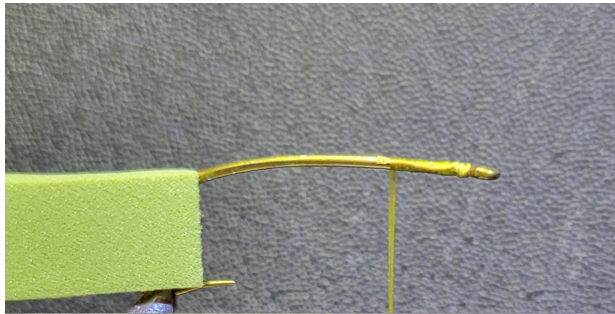
Body: Olive chenille (or brown or gold) spun with Arizona Simi Seal dubbing (or similar) in olive

Legs: Ring-neck pheasant flank, dyed golden-yellow (alternatives: olive-dyed guinea or pheasant hen center tail, or standard pheasant tail)

Upper thorax: Arizona Simi Seal dubbing

Wing Case (optional): peacock herl

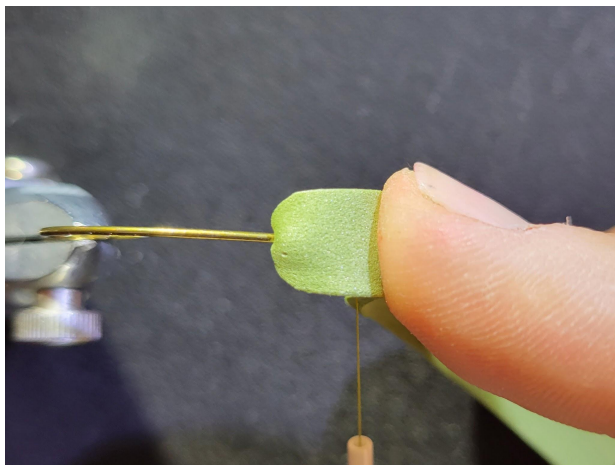
Other: Olive, red and/or black permanent markers



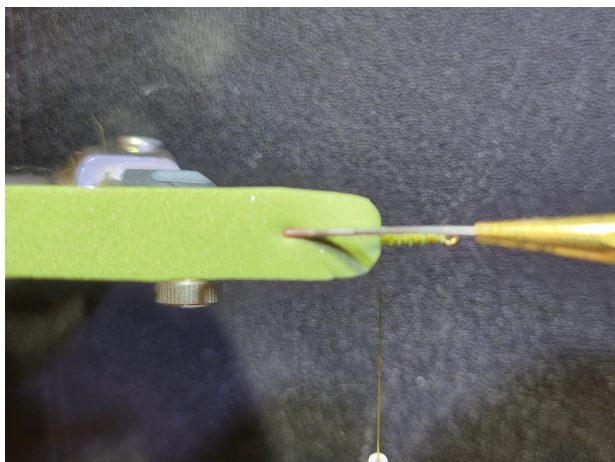
Start the thread behind the eye of the hook and wrap back to 25%. Cut a strip from the foam equal to the gap of the hook. Trim one end to a point.



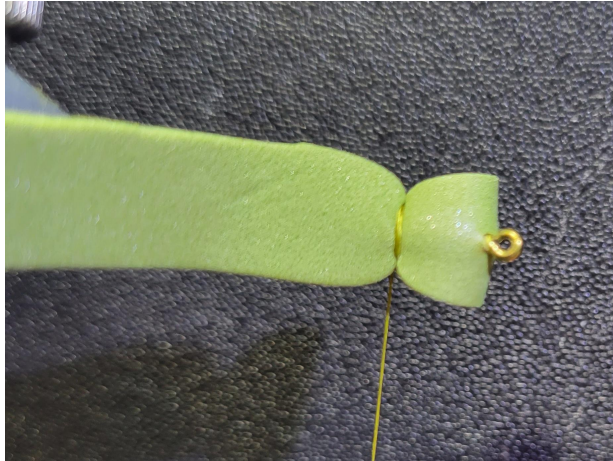
Unspin the thread until it is flat again. Tie the point in behind the eye of the hook, and wrap backward to 25%, cinching the foam down while using counter pressure to keep it on the top of the hook.



Finish with the thread up against the foam. Fold the foam forward and push it against the eye of the hook hard enough to leave a dent.



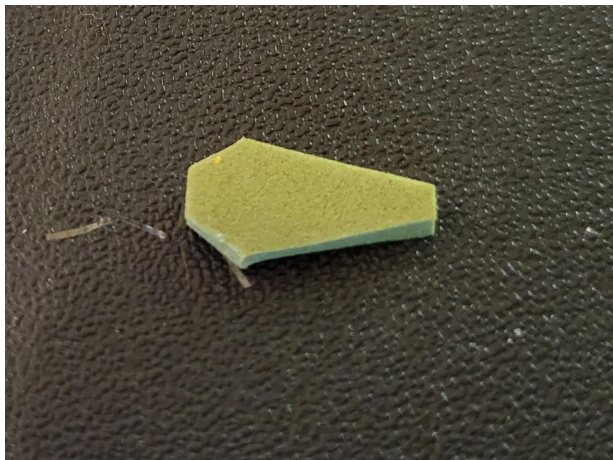
Pull the foam back up and poke a hook at the dent, making sure it is centered on the foam.



Push the foam over the eye of the hook until it pokes through, then keep folding the foam until it is heading back down the underside of the hook. Make sure it is centered. If you have a rotary vise, this is easier with the hook flipped upside down. Cinch down at this 25% position, using about 3 turns to fully tighten (just like working with deer hair). Wrap the foam back down to ~45% and trim.



Use a permanent marker to paint the eyes laterally red or black, and the rest of the top of the foam dark olive. Leave the underside of the foam alone—in dragonfly nymphs the underside is typically lighter. At this point a coating of Softex can be applied to protect the “art”. Now wrap the thread back down the hook until it is even with the barb.



Using the rest of the foam strip, cut the length of one piece to reach from the bend of the hook (above the barb) to 50%, and a second piece to reach from the bend to just behind the foam eyes. Trim both to this shape.



Cut a 7" piece of chenille, bare the string at one end, and tie it in at the back. Immediately next to it create a dubbing loop that is at least 1/2" shorter than the chenille, making sure to wrap the base to "close" it. Pull both aside. Unspin the thread and tie in the fat end of the shorter foam, then bring the thread forward to 50% and tie in the tip. Bring the thread forward to behind the eye, unspin it, and tie in the narrow end of the remaining, longer piece of foam. Put in a couple of half hitches at this point. If desired, put a little Superglue on the top of the rear foam.



Putting tension on the foam (both to stretch it and to keep it from rolling) use 5-6 widely-spaced wraps over the foam to reach the back of the fly and then tie in the fat tip just in front of the chenille. Bring the thread back forward with the same number of wraps, trying to place the wraps at the same spots on the sides and to create a nice zig-zag on the back. Note that we now have created the narrow-shouldered/fat-rear shape of a dragonfly nymph without compressing the foam and losing its buoyancy.



Now load up the dubbing loop, using a dubbing hook to hold it (and which will later wind it). Bring the chenille down next to the dubbing loop, loop it under the hook and then back up the other side. When you start spinning the dubbing loop, pull the chenille out at 90 degrees. Keep spinning and it will lock in place. Now spin up the dubbing loop concurrent with the chenille.



Brush out the fibers, then wrap the whole thing forward starting with two tight wraps. Tie the loop off with moderate room behind the eyes. Brush it out again, then give it a haircut. I like to leave the fibers hanging off the back intact, though.





Prepare the flank feather and tie in by the tip. Stroking the barbules back, make a single wrap and then tie it off. Part the barbules at the very top and pull them down on both sides so they are mostly on the bottom half of the fly.



Dub a thin noodle and fill in the gap, initially wrapping back a little on the barbules to lock them and finishing right behind the foam eyes. If you are skipping the wing case, the fly can be finished here. In this case I salvaged a few herl stumps off of the stem of a peacock eye, spaced them out and tied them in at the center of the herl. I then folded them back and trimmed them to the right length. I then finished the fly off with another dubbing noodle. I used superglue on the thread before I did a whip finish.



As per the above article, fish this fly with a full-sink line and a short (3-4') leader. Use a hand-twist retrieve alternating with short medium strips, 2x to 3x tippet, and be prepared for savage takes.

