

The Booby

By Beth Jappay



Rainbow trout can tolerate a wide range of temperatures, but prefer a water temperature in the 58 degree range. In summer months the bottom of the lake is cooler and more comfortable for them, and in winter months the bottom is warmer and more comfortable.

The British have come up with a new method of putting a fly near the bottom of the water column: floating flies on sinking lines. About 30 years ago a British tier used women's nylons to tie a pair of foam balls on the front end of a fly, then naming them booby flies. The term is now used to encompass many types of patterns of floating flies, which are in common use in Britain and Canada. Now that winter is here it is the perfect time to explore this new (for America) technique.

Rather than use sinking lines and/or weighted flies and countdowns to put the fly near the bottom, with the booby fly all that needs to be done to adjust the depth is to lengthen or shorten the leader. In addition the booby has a different action of movement. When you strip the line the fly dives down. If you pause or slow down, the fly will rise. The trout seem to find these bouncing boobies irresistible.

Another advantage to the booby is that this technique can be used to fish multiple different water columns. For example, by having one fly 4 feet and one fly 7 feet from the end of your sinking line, you can fish both ~ 3 and 5 feet off the bottom. I have been known to fish with 3 boobies, each 2-3 feet apart and thus covering the bottom 7 feet of the water column.

I use a 9 ½ foot 6 weight rod with this technique and a [parabolic fly line](#), which is a full sinking line with a type 5 belly and a type 3 tip. A type 5 or higher full sinking line works just fine as well. I have found a type 3 will work with one booby, but not well with two. My leader is simply a 2 foot section of 10lb fluoro with a perfection loop. I will use a triple surgeon's knot to attach a foot of 2x tippet for tapering and then to attach 6 to 9 feet of 3x tippet. I will then tie on a 7 inch length of 3x tippet also with a triple surgeon's knot about 3 feet from the tip to create a dropper. My dropper fly will usually be a woolly buggie or leech pattern, and my point fly often a brighter booby pattern, such as a FAB (subject of next month's article). I usually use a non-slip loop to

attach the point fly, as it gives the fly better movement, but use an improved clinch knot for my dropper, since it uses less tippet. Once the line is cast, wait until it has settled on the bottom, which can be detected by increased resistance to retrieval of the line. It can take a full minute or longer. The retrieval is a little different than a typical woolly bugger in that a long pause, or long slow strip can trigger a strike.

Interestingly, the fish seem to take a booby fly differently than most flies. For some reason they seem to like to nibble on them. Maybe it's the softness of the foam, or maybe the foam interferes with the hookup, but I've had to adjust my hook set to compensate. I've found that if I set vigorously by lifting my rod, I miss the trout more often than not, and that I've also missed my only chance by having moved the fly a significant distance. Instead I have learned it is best to do a 1-2 foot strip set. If I miss the first hook up, I have only moved the fly a couple of feet and the fish will often go after it again, giving me several chances. I now have a retrieval routine that I start after a nibble to try to "entice" the fish to a stronger bite (I used to say I was trying to "outsmart" the fish, but then a coworker pointed out that this wasn't particularly flattering if I failed). It is sometimes after my 4th or 5th strip set before I have a hookup.

I have found a few You Tube videos discussing fishing boobies, but only one book about it (only available on Kindle) written by [Michael Jensen](#). I can recommend his instruction but not his flies, and have come up with my own.



Boobies can be used on slow-moving rivers as well as lakes. This fall I was fishing the estuary of the Little Nestucca and the sea run cutthroat were jumping in the back deep section, but not biting my fly. I was convinced that I needed to get it deeper, so I went home and tied up a floating reverse spider. I fished that stretch the next weekend with it on my parabolic line and ended up landing 4 small dungeness crabs.



Booby eyes can get expensive, so I invested in a [booby cutter set](#) and foam blocks to cut my own. The blocks are 1 inch thick, and I snip the cylinders in half after I cut them out.



I tie all of my boobies on Hanak 900BL hooks, which have a 2x gape and are super sharp.

My most effective booby during a sunny day is a variation on an olive sealy bugger:

Hook: Hanak 900BL size 8

Thread: Ultra Thread 70 denier in Olive

Tail: olive marabou

Flash: Hareline Midge Flash in Root Beer

Dubbing is a blend of: Ice Dub in Golden Brown

Arizona Simi Seal--Golden Brown

Arizona Simi Seal--Golden Olive

Counter rib: 5x - 7x tippet

Booby Eyes: Green Foam Block cut to 6mm diameter.

Attach the thread behind the eye, and wrap to the bend

Attach olive marabou, and then a single strand of Crystal flash



Attach the tippet on the near side, then create a dubbing loop with thread and leave in place.. Bring the thread forward to one eye length behind the eye and secure with a half hitch. Wrap the booby eye three times around the center of the tube.



Then wrap the thread around the hook until the booby tube has cinched up around the top of the hook. Secure with a figure 8 wrap.
Fill the dubbing loop with the dubbing, then spin it up and brush it out.



Wrap forward to behind the eyes, then secure. Counter wrap the tippet forward and secure behind the booby eyes on the bottom of the hook, but don't cut. Wrap the thread forward to behind the eye of the hook, then pull the tippet under the booby eyes to behind the eye of the hook, then secure again. Cut the tippet and create a head with the thread and whip finish. Use Gorilla Glue or Super Glue on the bottom of the booby eyes to secure the eyes and the tippet. This prevents the eyes from rolling.



For rainy, overcast days, or closer to dark the trout are hunting by silhouette and dark flies work best. My current favorite is a very simple pull-over foam leech pattern of my own design:



Hook: Hanak 900BL size #10

Thread Ultra Thread 70 Denier in black

Tail: black marabou

Foam back: Cross-link sheet foam 2-3 mm in black

Body: Black marabou

Recipe: Attach the thread behind the eye and wrap to the bend of the hook. Attach the marabou then a 6-8mm wide section of foam, trimmed to make a narrower tip. Attach the black marabou by its tips, then wrap forward and secure. Pull over the foam back, and secure behind the eye. Trim the foam so it extends forward beyond the eye then whip finish a head behind the eye.

I find that with this pattern the width of the foam seems to create enough turbulence when stripped to give the marabou tail realistic motion.

In the summer I tie a variation of this pattern with olive marabou for the tail and body and an olive foam back. I find this works fantastic as a damselfly nymph or micro leech pattern and I fish it on an intermediate line.

So, if you are looking for something new to try this winter, take a look at boobies.