

## The Mighty Muddler



Above we see a magnificent Muddler Minnow tied by Bob MacDonald of Mulgrave, NS, for a River Magic Fly Tying Championship. His Muddler entry won 1<sup>st</sup>.

A recent fly tying workshop tackled the Muddler Minnow, arguably the world's most versatile fly. It's a must for all fly tyers to master, although a beginner would be well advised to conquer some simpler patterns before attempting a Muddler. At the end of the day, all left the building with 3 fishable Muddlers of their own tying and pride of achievement in their hearts.

The Muddler was originally designed to imitate a freshwater sculpin. Since then it has truly become the universal fly, a fly that can catch virtually any sport fish. A clipped deer hair head and hackle are essential features of any Muddler but the rest of the fly can vary in materials and colors. Some popular color schemes are tan/gold, white/silver, purple/red, black/gold, and olive/gold. Often a bright accent color, usually as a tail or butt, is added to the basic color schemes. A little Krystal Flash or Flashabou under the wing can add sparkling and flash to the fly. The thread portion of the Muddler head may also be color-coordinated, usually black or fluorescent red.



My late friend Bill Strople releasing a St. Mary's River salmon.

Muddler size can vary and it can be tied to fish wet, dry or both. These variations enable the Muddler to imitate a minnow, a nymph, a stonefly, a caddis, and a terrestrial such as a cricket, grasshopper, or moth. Late St. Mary's River guide Bill Strople used to say that if he could only have one fly, it would be a Muddler. Bill caught Atlantic salmon, brown trout, brook trout, rainbow trout, striped bass and mackerel on Muddlers, with the White Muddler his favorite.

## **Mighty Muddler**

Hook –	Streamer hook like the Mustad 9671 or 9762 hook, size 2, 4, 6, 8.
Thread –	GSP 75 denier
Tail –	Mottled turkey strips or brightly colored hackle fibers
Body –	FlatBraid, Holographic Mylar, or Diamond Braid Mylar tinsel
Wing –	Mottled turkey, goose, or duck quill strips, marabou, calf or squirrel tail over 4 strands of Krystal Flash. Any of these can be omitted in favor of a simpler wing.
Hackle –	Spun deer hair, natural or dyed
Head -	Clipped deer hair & thread finished with 2 coats of head cement.

## **Muddler Tying Tips:**

1. The traditional Muddler has a feather wing over a hair wing. If you are uncomfortable tying feather wing strips, just omit them. A hair wing, or marabou, or hair over synthetic flash material wing will do just fine.
2. The Muddler hackle & head are made from deer hair, with a thread portion just behind the hook eye.  
Strong thread is recommended for spinning deer hair, especially for tying a tight, durable fly.  
Remember to reserve space on the hook shank, just behind the hook eye, for a neat little thread head. First tie in & flare a bunch of deer hair with the natural tapered ends pointed backward, toward the tail of the fly, and the blunt clipped ends pointing forward. Then tie in & flare a second bunch of deer hair with BOTH ends clipped.
3. When applying head cement to the thread portion of the head, apply it BEFORE clipping the deer hair. The long deer hair is easy to hold out of the way so you can cement the thread neatly.
4. If you followed tip 2, clipping the deer hair head is easy. Simply trim all the blunt clipped hair and leave the natural tapered unclipped hair tips to form a nice collar hackle.
5. Don't be in a rush tying if you prefer a neat fly. If you like a nicely tied fly, you will likely have confidence in it and fish better than you might fish an inferior fly. However, messy Muddlers will also catch fish if fished well, and some anglers prefer them rough.

- Bill Carpan