



Favorite Flies for Fishing the Southeast

Seth Fields gives the creators their due, but he says it's okay to redesign established flies to match our local waters. Long live these variations!

The idea of standing knee deep in a summertime stream has gotten me through countless bouts of wintertime blues. Usually sometime around February, I start uncontrollably daydreaming about summertime bass ponds, muddy carp flats, tailing redfish, and sight casting to trout on my favorite streams. On cold-

enough days, I even fantasize about my local gar hole; you know you've got a bad case of cabin fever when you long for catching prehistoric river monsters that have hundreds of glass shards for teeth. That's what summer means to me.

It's a full-blown case of ADHD coupled with a desire to catch just about anything that swims, but I focus mostly on trout and bass. This is a benefit of living in the Southeast, particularly in my corner of East Tennessee, where I can get to any type of water within a matter of hours. Whether it's the trout streams of southern Appalachia, local reservoir smallmouth bass, tailwater brown trout, or even that local longnose gar hot spot, I switch it up to keep my fishing fresh. This also goes for my fly tying.

By some standards, I'm a pretty bad tier, not because of my abilities but because of my lack of discipline. You know the guys who sit down and hammer out a small army of identical, perfectly proportioned patterns? Well, that's not me. I'm lucky to complete three or four flies before I start switching it up. I think experimenting is a good thing. After all, where would fly tying be if we never left our comfort zones and occasionally shook things up?

Every tier should tap into his creative side, and I hope that while you read this article, you decide to get a little crazy and see what happens at your vise. Tie it, fish it, adapt it, and tie it again. Find the color schemes and materials that work best for you. You won't regret it.

Big Streamers for Trout

I'm not a dyed-in-the-wool trout guy. I grew up in a part of the Southeast that was almost a day's drive from even the nearest hatchery-supported trout stream, so it just wasn't a big part of our family fishing legacy. Trips to trout streams were always a special treat, but as my life has progressed, my family and I have slowly moved closer to the rhododendron-laced hills and streams of the southern Appalachians—not by accident, either.

While small, winding Appalachian freestone streams dominate the majority of my time, I also like the stability of tailwater fisheries. Throughout much of the Southeast, tailwater rivers maintain the proper water temperatures required for sustaining healthy trout populations. This is especially beneficial because many freestone mountain trout streams get a little warm by mid to late summer. I usually focus my efforts on those creeks in the season and fish tailwaters the rest of the year.

On most southern trout streams, summer offers local trout an abundance of food. Baitfish congregate and dart excitedly in the shallows, caddisflies flutter wildly and dabble on the surface, and terrestrials find their way to the water with an awkward *plop!* It's as though nature were ringing the dinner bell. All the major food groups are there, and now it's time to eat!

If you run into me on a trout stream, the chances are I'll be swinging streamers downstream. That's right, I'm a streamer guy. For me, there's no greater satisfaction than a tight grab on a well-placed streamer, so this is where we will start.

Lately, it seems that the trend in the trout-streamer game is to go big or go home. That's great if you've got jumbo trout, wide rivers, and a rotator cuff to support throwing meaty patterns against the bank all day, but I find that on most southern trout streams—and on almost any trout stream in the world, for that matter—you just can't beat a Woolly Bugger. If you want to target the more carnivorous salmonids in your local waterway, the Redhead Woolly Bugger variation will elicit that predatory one-two punch you're after; the red throat on this pattern seems to get the fish riled up when a regular Bugger gets refusals.

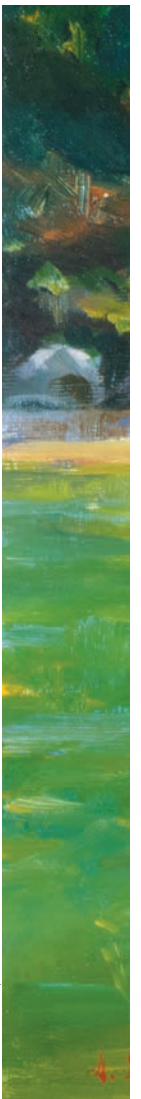
The Bloody Hairy is my other go-to streamer for fishing southern waterways. The collar on this leech pattern is made using a Fair Flies brush that pushes a lot of water, has great movement, and most important, looks slightly bloody. (Are you sensing a theme here?) I often dead-drift leech patterns like this when the fish are in deep water or behaving sluggish. If you still want a meaty pattern to entice the brutes of the underwater world, try this variation of Jerry French's Summer Sculpin. It should also be a staple in your streamer box.

Southeast Summer Dry Flies

When it comes to dry flies for a Southeast summer, trout streams sometimes offer slim pickings. I can, however, always count on using caddisfly imitations. I'd almost be willing to lay down a bet that if a hatch occurs, it will be caddisflies. On the off chance that I'm wrong, I have faith that the Puterbaugh Foam Caddis will catch fish anyway. Once, I even stood in the middle of a large *Hexagenia* mayfly hatch in Western North Carolina with no matching pattern in my box. After a minute or two of searching through my fly boxes for an imitation, I gave up, tied on an Un-sinkable Caddis, and started catching trout on almost every cast, even fish that were keying in on those mayflies.

I also like casting bigger dries, such as my Brookie Bug, a fusion of an Elk-Hair Caddis and Stimulator that rides high but still has a small-to-medium-size profile. This pattern is perfect for fishing small southern Appalachian trout streams. It also works well as an indicator pattern when combined with a small nymph or wet fly as a dropper. Use this dry-dropper technique with the Orange & Orange wet fly or try your own color schemes out to see what works best for you.

I run the same dry fly-dropper rig using a Stimulator tied in grasshopper colors for when terrestrials are on the water. The Iridescent Ant is my go-to wet fly for this



SLOW EVENING, BY ADRIANO MANOCCHIA

because grasshoppers and ants are always on the southern summer food menu. I occasionally swing the Iridescent Ant by itself on bright, sunny days, and the strikes are usually incredible. You'd better double-check your knots!

Bass Are Like Comfort Food

Ahhh . . . bass. My oldest friends—or enemies, depending upon how you look at them. But I'm sure the fondness is one sided.

I grew up a bass-pond kid. I lived on one, and spent most childhood summers barefoot in the shallows searching for Mr. Lunker. Today, it's much the same, but the ponds have gotten bigger and the old Zebco reel sits collecting dust. When I think of summer, this is most often where my mind goes. There is a fierceness and predictability in bass that makes fishing for them a sort of comfort food. They can't resist eating everything in sight, and I can't resist catching them.

I often hear non-tiers and general killjoys say that it doesn't matter what you throw at them, all you really need is a basic popper. I don't disagree that poppers catch bass—oh boy, do they—but I do disagree with this one-

size-fits-all approach. There probably isn't a trout in the world that can't be caught with an olive Woolly Bugger or Adams, so why single out bass as one-dimensional? We tie different patterns because we enjoy doing it, not because it is necessary. Bass flies are no different.

Bass flies fit into at least two distinct categories: imitations of food and attractors. I tie flies that either emulate an exact food source or just drive bass nuts, focusing on color and movement. The bass on my local impoundment have abundant sources of food and will actually move around the lake following a meal. There are several islands and coves on my lake that support a healthy hatch of large *Hexagenia* mayflies throughout the summer. Yes, I throw dry flies to bass; watching a seven-pounder slowly sip a mayfly imitation from the surface and then go ballistic is amazing. Most large reservoirs and lakes support mayfly hatches, so tie a few Flex Hex flies and experience the thrill of bass on dry flies.

More Favorite Flies

Shad are another specific food source for bass. Spotted bass, largemouth bass, and striped bass all eat shad. Fish



Flies *for Trout*



Bloody Hairy

Hook: 3X-long streamer hook, size 2.

Thread: Black gel spun.

Weight: .030 lead-free wire.

Tail: Black marabou blood quills.

Body: Red floss.

Collar: Fair Flies Bleeding Leech black brush or a similar brush.

Head: Black tungsten bead.

Note: Don't overdo wrapping the brush; one complete turn will give you the correct profile and shape.



Summer Sculpin

Hook: 3X-long streamer hook, size 1.

Thread: Black gel spun.

Tail: Olive magnum Zonker strip.

Body: Fair Flies red/black Mind Bender 5D Brush, brown ostrich plumes, Senyo's Predator Wrap, and olive saddle hackles.

Collar: Senyo's Laser Dub, sculpin olive.

Weight: Black dumbbell eyes.

Note: This pattern is a variation of a fly by Jerry French.



Orange & Orange Soft-Hackle

Hook: Wet fly hook, size 14.

Thread: Orange 6/0 (140 denier).

Body: Brown goose biot and orange SLF Spikey Dubbing.

Collar: Orange soft hackle.



Puterbaugh Foam Caddis

Hook: Dai-Riki #125, size 16.

Thread: Semperfli Micro Glint in medium olive.

Body: 3-millimeter-thick olive foam.

Wing: Pale morning dun cul de canard.

Hackle: Barred dark ginger.

Note: This pattern is a variation of a fly designed by Don Puterbaugh.



Brookie Bug

Hook: Regular dry fly hook, size 14.

Thread: Orange 8/0 (70 denier).

Rib: Small bronze wire.

Body: Orange SLF Spikey Dubbing and barred dark ginger hackle.

Underwing: Root beer Midge Flash.

Wing: Pale morning dun cul de canard.

Head: 1.5-millimeter-thick white foam, barred olive rubber legs, and orange SLF Spikey Dubbing.



Ant Soft-Hackle

Hook: Wet fly hook, size 12.
Thread: Black 6/0 (140 denier).
Body: UTC micro Herl Chenille and tying thread.
Hackle: Dark olive soft hackle.



Buzzer

Hook: Gamakatsu C13U Keel Balance, size 16 or 14.
Thread: Black 6/0 (140 denier).
Body: Tying thread.
Rib: Micro Flashabou.
Gills: Red Flashabou.
Coating: Solarez thin light-activated glue.



Rubber-Legged Stimulator

Hook: Dai-Riki #270, size 6.
Thread: Olive 3/0 (210 denier).
Tail: Root beer Midge Flash and olive elk hair.
Body: Olive floss and olive Semperfli Straggle String.
Rib: Fine chartreuse wire.
Underwing: Krystal Flash.
Wing: Elk hair.
Hackle: Olive saddle hackle.
Head: Orange SLF Spikey Dubbing and barred olive rubber legs.



Zebra Midge Variation

Hook: Daiichi 1167, size 18.
Thread: Black 6/0 (140 denier).
Body: Tying thread.
Rib: Pearl Semperfli iridescent thread.
Wing: A single strand of Krystal Flash.
Collar: A pinch of Senyo's Laser Dub, sculpin olive.



Redhead Woolly Bugger

Hook: 3X-long streamer hook, size 2.
Thread: Black gel spun.
Weight: .030-inch lead-free wire.
Tail: Olive marabou and root beer Midge Flash.
Body: Fine dark olive chenille, red Semperfli Straggle String, and olive saddle hackle.
Rib: Medium silver wire.
Note: To help build an even profile, wrap the lead-free wire underneath only the red throat. Start wrapping the wire at the midpoint where the olive chenille ends, and leave room at the head for a clean hackle finish.



Golden Stonefly

Hook: Dai-Riki #270, size 6.
Thread: Black 6/0 (140 denier).
Weight: Lead-free wire.
Tail: Orange SLF Spikey Dubbing and gold turkey biots.
Abdomen: Burnt orange Semperfli Quick Dub and turkey tail feathers.
Rib: Brass wire.
Thorax: Orange SLF Spikey Dubbing and gold turkey biots.
Wing case: Turkey tail feathers.
Finish: Light-activated glue or epoxy on the wing case.

the Articulated Clouser Minnow, my go-to, fast-sinking imitation, in still waters or tight against rocky riverbanks when smallmouth and other bass are chasing shad.

When it comes to frogs, I lean more toward creative patterns rather than specific imitations, again with a focus on color and movement. Based on their willingness to chase frogs and the increase in topwater activity around the time frogs become plentiful, I believe that bass crave frogs more than most other food. I tie an arsenal of diving, popping, and wiggling imitations that drive trophy bass bonkers.

I love fishing for bass in rivers. Whether they're small-mouth, spotted, or largemouth bass, none resist the original Sneaky Pete. Rather than the original balsa heads, however, I prefer using the indestructible double-barrel foam popper heads from Flymen Fishing Company. And the Double Pete is a favorite pattern for early in the season when good topwater fishing is still not quite guaranteed.

My favorite popper, the Damsel in Distress, came about when I was talking with a West Coast steelhead guide while he tied a popper set on a shank with a trailing hook, much like a steelhead fly. This thing is deadly. I always tie it with an undersized blue popper head, and I swear the bass think it's a damselfly. Cast the fly, let it land on the water, and wait a few seconds before making your first strip or pop. This is often when the magic happens!

The Bullfriggle and Crawdiggle both have enticing movement, especially the way they wiggle. Although the two are similar in design, I fish the Bullfriggle as a topwater diver using a floating line, and the Crawdiggle as a subsurface swimmer with a sinking line. Both are absolute bass killers.

Be sure to try the Wormhole for carp, bream, and bass. When fish are holding tight to their redds and aren't willing to chase, the Wormhole is the perfect pattern to entice them. Carp also can't resist its floating tail and movement when the Wormhole bumps along the bottom. It's my catchall pattern that is easy to tie and fun to fish.

When it comes to summertime, fish each day as if it were the last of the season. It's a time to experiment, have fun, and work on your farmer's tan. Push the envelope and see what new patterns you can create.

If you approach each tying session thinking that established patterns are just the outlines for new creations, you will feel more fulfilled at the end of a day of fishing. Let the other guy lay the groundwork, and then make your flies your own.

Okay, I'll be on the water, fishing as much as life, work, and family will allow. Leave a message after the beep. I'll get back to you sometime around autumn. 🐸

Seth Fields manages this magazine's digital outlets: website, Facebook page, and more. He is also the editor of our sister online publication, The Angling Report. The Angling Report is the last word in authoritative information about where to fish around the world. The Angling Report's readers provide reviews about the places they have fished, so it is information you can trust. For more information, go to www.anglingreport.com. Seth lives in East Tennessee.

Flies *for* Bass



Double Pete

Hook: Ahrex TP650-26, size 3/0.

Thread: Black gel spun.

Weed guard: 40-pound-test monofilament.

Weight: Lead-free wire.

Tail: Chartreuse EP Fibers, and black-and-chartreuse rubber legs.

Body: Black Semperfli Straggle String.

Head: Small double-barrel popper.

Legs: Two chartreuse rubber legs and one barred rubber leg.

Eyes: 4-millimeter Fish-Skull Living Eyes.



Bullfriggle

Hook: Ahrex NS122, size 2.

Thread: Black gel spun.

Tail: Olive marabou and barred olive rubber legs.

Rib: Medium silver wire.

Body: Olive Straggle String and olive hackle.

Head: 4-millimeter-thick foam, olive.

Eyes: 4-millimeter Ice (silver) Fish-Skull Living Eyes.

Note: Want to learn how to tie this fly? Check out the video on www.flytyer.com to see how it's done.



Articulated Clouser Minnow

Rear hook: Gamakatsu SC15, size 6.
Thread: White gel spun.
Tail: White bucktail and Krystal Flash.
Body: Pearl sparkle braid.
Collar: White soft hackle.
Wire: Senyo's Intruder Trailer Hook Wire, silver.
Bead: Orange Carolina rig bead.
Front hook: Ahrex NS122, size 4.
Weight: Silver dumbbell.
Tail: White bucktail and shad gray bucktail.
Body: Pearl sparkle braid.
Bottom wing: White bucktail.
Top wing: Shad gray bucktail and Krystal Flash.
Note: This fly is a variation of Bob Clouser's original famous pattern.



Damsel in Distress

Rear hook: Ahrex NS182, size 4.
Wire: Senyo's Intruder Trailer Hook Wire, silver.
Thread: Black gel spun.
Shank: Fish-Skull 25-millimeter-long shank.
Body: Fair Flies blue/grizzly/pink Mind Bender 5D Brush.
Head: Small Surface Seducer Double Barrel popper and barred rubber legs.
Eyes: 3-millimeter Volcanic (red) Surface Seducer Dragon Eyes.



Flex Hex

Hook: Dai-Riki #270, size 6.
Thread: Black 6/0 (140 denier).
Underbody: Six strands of root beer Midge Flash wrapped around the shank.
Body: 4-millimeter-thick foam and tying thread.
Wing case: 2-millimeter-thick light tan foam.
Wing: Grizzly hackle.



Wormhole

Hook: Ahrex NS172, size 4.
Thread: Black gel spun.
Tail: Red chenille and 4-millimeter-thick red foam.
Body: Red Straggle String.
Eyes: Large black bead chain.
Note: To make the tail, start by cutting a deep slit into a cube of foam. Apply superglue to the inside of the slit, insert the chenille, and close tightly until set.



Crawdiggle

Hook: Ahrex NS122, size 2.
Thread: Black gel spun.
Tail: Orange barred marabou, two strands of root beer Midge Flash, and two shrimp orange rubber legs.
Weight: Large black bead chain.
Body: Orange SLF Spikey Dubbing and orange Semperfi Straggle String.
Head: 4-millimeter-thick orange foam.
Note: To see a great video showing how to tie this pattern, go to www.flytyer.com.