

Pacchiarini's Wiggletail

During spring, slow may be the way to go for pike.

By Matt Harris



Flyfishing for pike in cold water during spring takes real discipline. It can be a slow business. Pike, like many apex predators, can go "off the chew" for long hours. When they are off, they really are off.

Then, suddenly, nature flicks a switch, the barometer rises or the river starts to fall and clear, and they are very much on.

When that happens, it's easy to let the excitement get to you. You speed up your retrieve and forget those crucial pauses that so often induce a solid take. Don't do that. Slow down, instead. Pike are lazy. They look for victims in trouble. Victims that are incapacitated. Victims that can't get away.

The problem with fishing flies ultra-slow is that pike get a chance to really examine your offering. No matter how much time and attention to detail you put into your fly, guess what? It's just a bunch of fluff and feathers. They reject it. You'll need something that looks alive, even when it's barely moving.



Italian angler Paolo Pacchiarini is a brilliant predator angler. He holds 10 IGFA records and really understands how to induce big, wary predators into taking a fly.

His Wiggletail patterns are deadly. They have a huge amount of presence in the water and create a big profile that is much easier to cast than a traditional pattern of equal size. In the water, they move with a sinuous allure, even when retrieved in an ultra-slow, figure-eight next to the boat. Using Paolo's ingenious snap link system, you can quickly change the tail from dark to light, flashy to somber, and large to small.

Pacchiarini recently introduced a couple of variations on the design, and his Dragontails and Wavetails offer an option that is every bit as effective as the original.

Pike absolutely love Wiggletails, and nail them with abandon. I recently started using the tails on hybrid Gamechanger patterns, tied by my good friend Rupert Harvey (he ties innovative patterns for clients worldwide from his base in Ireland). Equipped with rattles, the flies have proven themselves for pike, and also for big peacock bass, arapaima and huge chinook salmon in Chile. When the water warms up in spring, it is worth experimenting with Gamechanger poppers equipped with a wiggletail.



Some people still harbor prejudices against Wiggletails—they don't consider them to be valid flies. I would urge you not to entertain such negative thoughts—fly-fishing for big pike in icy conditions is tough enough without further handicapping yourself. Embrace this great addition to the pike-fisher's armory, and enjoy the action these flies provide, even on the coldest spring days.

A tip: before you fish the Wiggletail, gently but firmly stretch it. This will soften the tail and make it more mobile in the water.

Wiggletail

Hook: Various sizes Sakuma or similar pike hooks 2/0 to 6/0, incorporated into Niklas Bauer Pike Rig with rattle

Thread: 100d GSP white

Head: Bucktail in white and medium dunn

Head: Nayat (Snow Runner) in grey and black

Head: Red wool roving

Head: Black wool roving mixed with black angelina fibre

natural grizzly saddle

Flash: White Deer Creek Mega Lazer dub (or use white wool roving mixed with silver angelina fibre) Metz

Flash: Hedron Magnum Flashabou in moonlight

Flash: Hedron Mirage in pink

Flash: Hedron standard Flashabou in silver and black

Flash: Holofusion in opal

Eyes: Jerkbaitmania 12mm eyes

Tails: Various Wiggletails attached with fast change snap



