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How The Ice Cream Cone Chironomid Came to Be

You have no chance to be a stillwater guru until you tie and fish this fly.
By Brian Chan | June 2021



Fly fishing continually evolves, be it advancements in tackle, the challenges of new fisheries, or the evolution of fly patterns and fishing techniques. In fact, what may seem like a simple fishing or tying advancement may turn into a significant step in the refinement of a fishery. That's often the case with stillwater trout fishing, where creative anglers are attracted to the sport because it offers plenty of challenge and equal reward, in the form of skeptical trout that run

much larger on average than their stream-raised counterparts.

One of the most productive lake fishing methods is to fish with chironomids, which are also called midge pupa. In nutrient-rich waters these members of the dipteran insect family form a significant part of a trout or char's diet. During spring and summer daily chironomid emergences cloud the water with pupa wiggling to the surface. Chironomid pupa must taste good because the biggest trout gorge on even the smallest pupa. Fish literally swallow hun-

dreds of those insects as they slowly ascend to become adults. But matching chironomids and getting a fish to take isn't as easy as you'd think it would be. In lakes, fish have the time to study these insects closely and anything but a perfect match likely will be refused. That's why matching chironomids has become an art form, and Kelly Davison, the former owner of SeaRun Fly & Tackle in Coquitlam, British Columbia, made one of the greatest advancements in chironomid construction of all time.



Back in 1992, Davison enlisted his two sons to thread multiple sizes of black beads onto long monofilament lines strung between fence posts in his backyard. Then, armed with a can of Tremclad paint, Davison sprayed the individual beads white. This was not a perfect process, as rows of beads ended up glued together on the line. Still, he was onto something and he refined his effort.

Recently, I asked Davison what his thought process was behind those white beads and he

summed it up by saying, "I like tying simple flies so I was not a fan of having to tie in white ostrich or yarn to imitate the white gills (on chironomid pupa). And I was also convinced that the white gills were a key trigger in fish selecting the pupa." He named his creation the Ice Cream Cone Chironomid. He fished it first at Leighton Lake near the city of Kamloops, British Columbia, and his experience indicated the merit of his theory.

"I was anchored in 10 feet of water and was lowering an Ice

Cream Cone pattern over the side of the boat to see how well the white bead stood out," he recalled, "and a trout swam up to the fly, flared its gills and ate it." Davison said a lot of rainbows ate Ice Cream Cone Chironomids that day and they continue to do so today on stillwaters sprinkled across North America.



Originally, Davison tied Ice Cream Cones on long-shank dry fly hooks, such as the TMC 2302. He now ties them on scud hooks, such as TMC 2457 or Daiichi 1120. These patterns are tied in sizes 10 through 18 in either hook design.

Initially, Ice Cream Cone bodies were tied with Danville's 6/0 tying thread in black, brown, olive, maroon, and dark green. These patterns were ribbed with fine red or gold copper wire to accent the detailed ribbing seen on the real insects. More recent refinements focus on imitating the almost mirror-like sheen of

the body, which develops during pupal ascent. This is the effects of gases that line the inside of the pupal shuck, which aid in the adult emergence process. Today there are numerous synthetic materials that work well for pupal bodies. Stretchy products like Super Floss, Stretch Flex and Scud Back make it easy to form tapered bodies while at the same time imparting the illusion of trapped gases. Anti-static bag material, which is the packaging used to ship computer parts and window tint, also makes an excellent pupal body. Ribbings of various colored wire, or com-

binations of wires or holographic tinsels, add even more flash to the flies.

These days white beads are readily available in a variety of sizes as well as in metal or tungsten. Use them in the design of your next pupal creations and you'll likely have a new go-to fly when fishing stillwaters. Know that I'll be packing plenty of these patterns, tied in various colors and sizes, to the stillwater lakes of British Columbia this spring and summer.



Original Ice Cream Cone

Hook: Tiemco 2302 #10 - #18

Thread: Danville 6/0 Black

Body: 6/0 thread, Super Floss, Stretch Flex, Scud Back to match pupal color

Rib: Red, silver, gold, dull copper wire

Thorax: Black tying thread

Head: White metal bead

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