

This Month's Special Deals



BH Birds Nest - Brown
0.69



BH Caddis Poopah - Olive
0.69



BH Copper J
0.69



BH Copper J - Red
0.69



BH Copper J - Rubber Legs
0.69

In Praise of Beads

It wasn't all that long ago that the idea of having a shiny metal bead at the head of a nymph would get you a dirty look and a shake of the head. After all, the head of a fly is supposed to be made of neatly wrapped and knotted thread, gleaming with a shiny coat of nail polish.

Those days are long gone, of course. Metal beads are a staple of modern fly design. Gold, silver or solid colors; bronze, tungsten, glass; smooth, faceted, spherical, cone-shaped - nymph beads have become a category of fly-tying material. It's hard to imagine a serious angler (or even a casual angler!) who doesn't have a few bead-head flies in his or her fly box.

But you can't blame the old-timers for being skeptical. If you're trying to imitate the larva or pupa of a caddis fly, mayfly or stonefly (well, mayflies don't have pupae, but you get the idea), why would you want to add something so obviously man-made and un-insect-like?

Still, as most of us know, bead-head flies catch fish like crazy. The trout don't seem to be very skeptical at all.

What makes a trout think a bead-head fly is something worth eating? Probably something else about the fly: its wiggling hackles, its segmented abdomen, its wingcase, its color, its shape, its size, the fact that it's drifting

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Clearance - 25% - 35% Off



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Lamson Konic
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BH Czech Mate Nymph - Olive
0.69



BH Flash Back Hare's Ear
0.69



BH Hare's Ear - Brown
0.69



BH Pheasant Tail - Black
0.69



BH Scud - Orange
0.69



BH Scud - Tan
0.69



BH Super Flash Pheasant Tail
0.69



along in the same lane as other tidbits.

But it's that shiny bead that caught the trout's attention in the first place. Flash is important in attracting fish. Many real insects, like some species of caddis, are encased in a bubble of gases as they drift in the currents or ascend to the surface. Some adult caddis that lay their eggs underwater gather a bubble of air around them when they dive. These bubbles are shiny, and that shine may well serve as a feeding trigger for trout.

The shine of a bead may in itself suggest life as surely as those wiggling hackles. After all, lots of junk and debris floats past trout all day long: bits of leaves, twigs, moss and other natural stuff with no nutritional value. None of it shines.

Then again, it may be as simple as this: the shine gets the nymph noticed. And don't discount the curiosity factor. The trout may not be fooled into thinking your Bead Head Hare's Ear is food; it may just wonder what the heck it is. Having no hands, the only way a fish can grab anything for examination is with its mouth.

For the angler, the bead solves a number of problems and presents a number of opportunities. As mentioned, it provides a bit of flash that may mimic a natural characteristic or may simply draw attention - either way is fine. It can also add the weight that is necessary to sink down near the bottom, where the fish are much of the time (especially in February.)

Unweighted Pheasant Tails, Princes and Gold Ribbed Hare's Ears are beautiful flies that suggest living things very effectively. But if they sail unnoticed three feet above the trout, they won't put a bend in your rod. Beads get you down there where the fish are. Tungsten beads get you down there in a hurry.

But the weight of a bead is useful for more than just sinking, although a lot of anglers



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Clearance
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25% Off



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Simms Clearance Waders, Boots, Packs, Jackets,

BH WD40 - Black
0.69



BH WD40 - Chartreuse
0.69



BH Woven Stonefly Nymph - Brown
0.69



BH Zebra Midge - Chartreuse
0.69



BH Zebra Midge - Olive
0.69

don't seem to realize it. The Gospel of Dead Drift is very influential in the fly-fishing world, but a bead-head nymph can be used as the same kind of lure that so effectively catches everything from trout to shad to striped bass: a jig.

Short strips of line or twitches of the rod tip can make a bead-head nymph hop upward and drop back down. Real insects do this sort of thing too, especially when they're restless before a hatch. But jigging doesn't have to imitate life-cycle behavior. That hopping behavior proves beyond a shadow of a doubt that whatever that thing with the shiny round head is, it's alive. And it seems helpless. And it's just the right size for a snack.

You can jig gently in deep, slow pools. You can add some frantic movement at the end of your drift, when the fly starts to swing and rise anyway. You are free to make your fly move on its own, instead of drifting along like a twig.

That movement may prove to be the most effective feeding trigger of all. And the once-aligned bead makes it possible.

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