

# Articulation Perfection

Here's a fishing secret: The biggest trout prefer eating the most vulnerable insects. This pattern imitates a helpless-looking fly that no trophy fish can resist.

by Vince Wilcox

**A**rticulated dry flies are not very popular; in fact, there are very few jointed surface patterns. Every commercial tier likes to believe that he is the first to create something really new, but I have also learned that more often than not, someone else may have had a similar idea. When it comes to producing flies commercially, the Dingle-Berry is certainly one of the first of its kind. The Dingle-Berry, as my customers and I lovingly call this pattern, is sold by Idylwilde Flies by the name of the Hanging Chad. (Apparently



DAVE KLAUSMEYER

the nice folks at Idylwilde thought the term *dingle-berry* didn't fit the family-friendly spirit of fly-fishing. Check *dingle-berry* on Google to learn more.)

When creating this articulated dry fly, I was thinking about the propensity of fish to select the easiest targets for their meals. This also led me to design many dry flies on curved-shank hooks and with trailing shucks; these features give these patterns the illusion of being stuck in the surface film as they are emerging or even crippled on the surface. A curved hook and parachute allow the rear of the abdomen to sink below the surface and imitate an easy mark for the trout, or at least an insect that is inhibited from quickly flying away.

To take the dry fly to the next level, I wanted to figure out what else I could do to catch fish in still waters and on slow flats when selectivity seems to be at its peak. Fish feeding in flats and lakes have the advantage of inspecting their food at a leisurely pace because the insects aren't quickly whisked away. This helps explain a fish's enhanced selectiveness in flat water versus the aggressive nature of a trout living in fast-moving water.

After carefully observing several hatches of larger insects, I determined that the bigger, more selective fish keyed in on the bugs that were still working to get free of their shucks; many anglers have observed the same thing. I had used a dry-dropper rig to imitate emerging insects with great success, but there were many occasions when



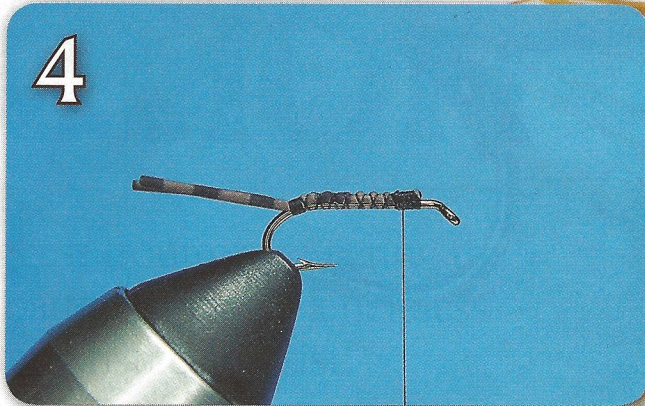
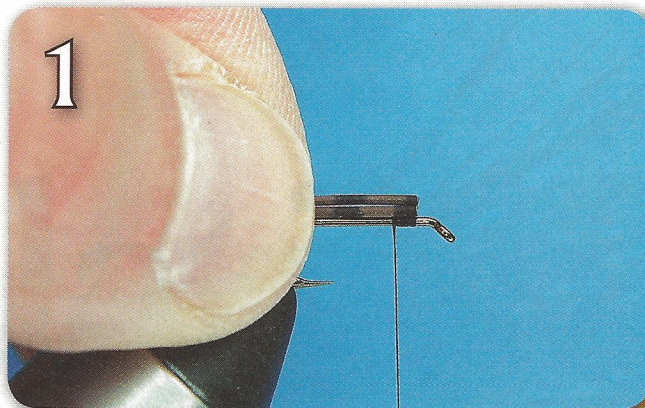
## Dingle-berry

### Rear Section

**Hook:** Mustad 3906, size 14.  
**Thread:** Black 8/0 (70 denier).  
**Tail:** Brown speckled Centipede Legs.  
**Abdomen:** Pheasant tail Midge Tubing.  
**Rib:** Natural ostrich herl.  
**Head:** Olive brown Ice Dub.  
**Connecting joint:** 20-pound-test fly line backing. You may color the backing using a permanent marker.

### Front Section

**Hook:** Mustad C49S, size 12 or 10.  
**Thread:** Black 8/0 (70 denier).  
**Abdomen:** Pheasant tail Midge Tubing.  
**Post:** Orange foam cylinder.  
**Underwing:** Pearl Krystal Flash.  
**Wing:** Golden brown elk hair.  
**Legs:** Brown speckled Centipede Legs.  
**Hackle:** Furnace.  
**Thorax:** Olive brown Ice Dub.

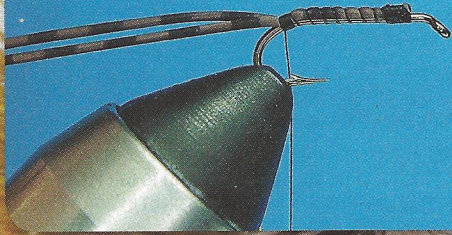


## Rear Section of the Dingle-berry

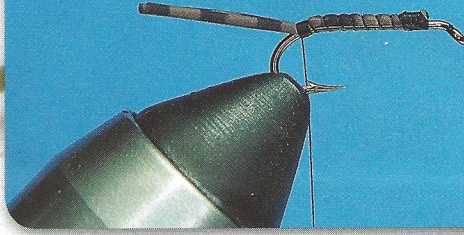
- 1 Start the thread about one-quarter of the way down the hook shank. Cut the legs so the butt ends are even. Hold the legs over the hook with the tag ends just past the thread.
- 2 Make three to four tight thread wraps over the ends of the legs. Continue wrapping the thread to the end of the hook shank.
- 3 When the thread is opposite the hook barb, make an additional six tight wraps toward the bend.
- 4 Trim the tail equal to the length of the hook shank.
- 5 Tie the Midge Tubing to the far side of the hook shank.
- 6 Pinch the ostrich herl to the side of the hook shank at an angle with the tag end sticking past the thread.
- 7 Tie the ostrich herl on parallel to the near side of the hook shank. Wrap the thread up the hook.
- 8 Wrap the tubing up the hook. Tie off and clip the excess.
- 9 Wrap the ostrich herl over the tubing to create the gills of the fly. Tie off and snip the surplus.
- 10 Add a tiny pinch of dubbing to the thread. Wrap the dubbing behind the hook eye. Whip-finish and cut the thread.



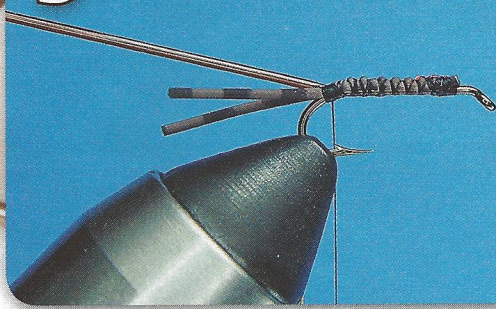
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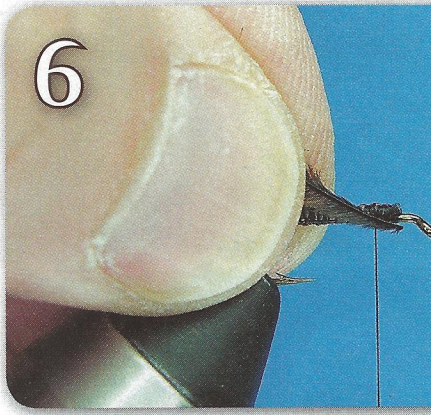
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ALL TYING STEPS BY VINCE WILCOX





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### Making the Connection

**1** Push a threader through the hook eye.

**2** Cut a 2-inch-long piece of fly line backing. Feed the backing through the threader, and start pulling it back through the hook eye.

**3** Continue pulling the threader through the hook eye. Pull slowly or you will pull the whole piece of backing out the other side.

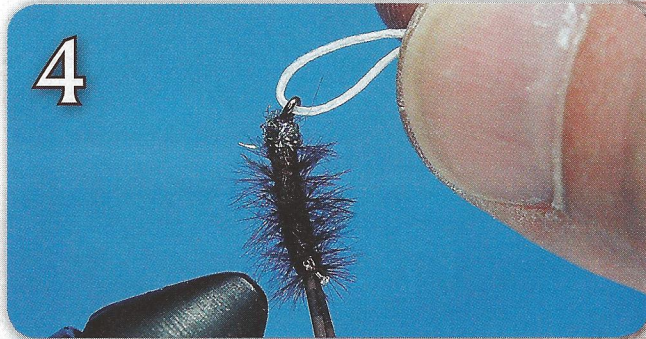
**4** Pinch the two ends of the backing together so the fly eye is caught in the loop. Cut the back of the hook just behind the abdomen using wire cutters or pliers. This completes the butt end of the fly.

**5** Place the front hook in the vise. Start your thread on the shank just ahead of the barb. Pinch and tie the fly line backing to the top of the front hook. We are going to pull the butt end into position in a moment, so don't make these wraps too tight.

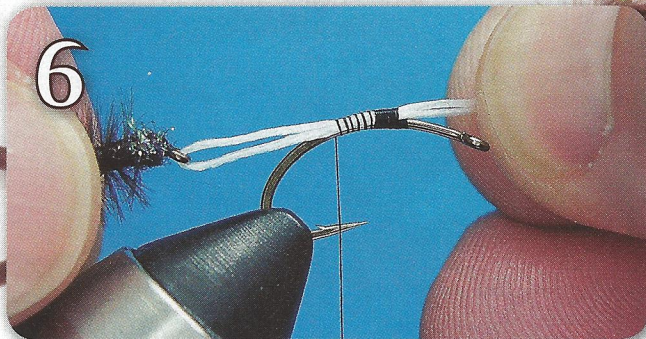
**6** Grab the loose ends of the backing in one hand and the butt end of the fly in the other. Gently pull the backing until the butt end of the fly almost touches the front hook shank; you may have to tug a little harder if the thread wraps are too tight.

**7** Wrap the thread halfway down the hook shank. The loop of backing should be snug against the front hook shank, but the butt end of the fly should still be able to wiggle.

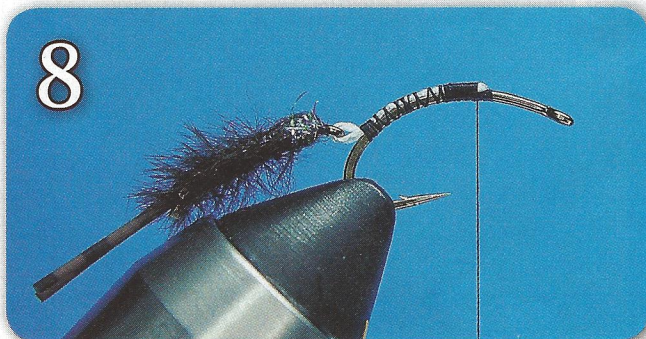
**8** Wrap the thread to the starting position. The fly line backing compresses and is much more durable and easier to tie on than monofilament. Clip the tags of backing.



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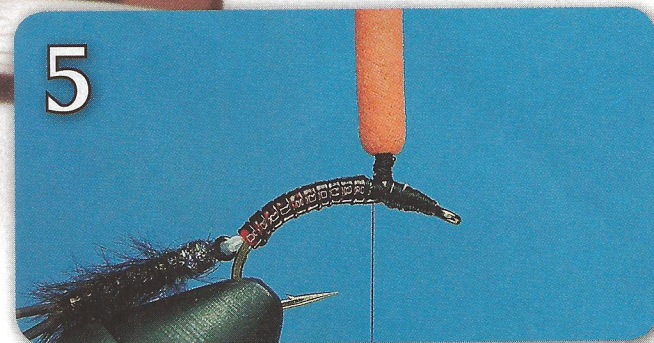
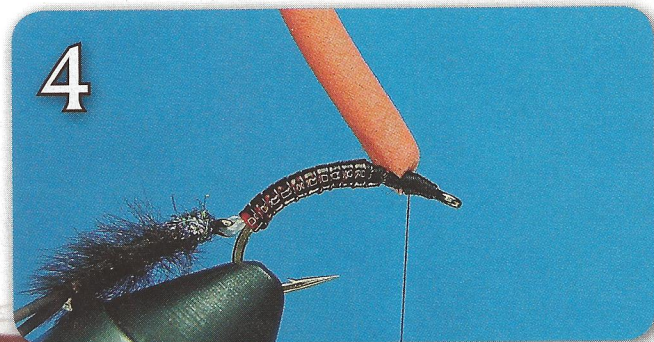
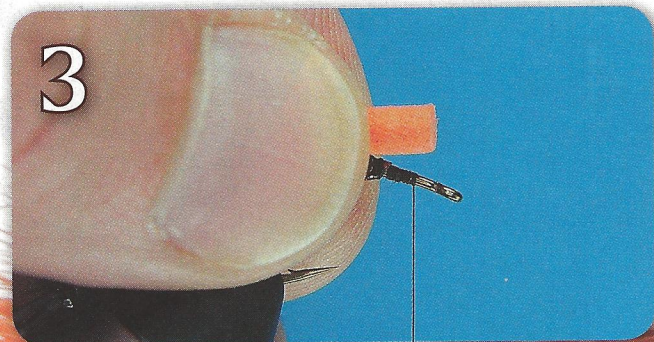


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### Starting the Front Section

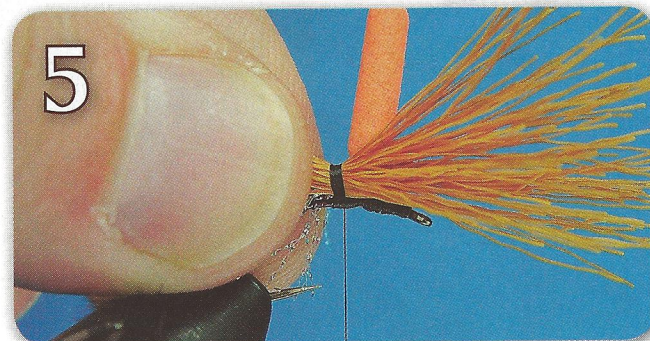
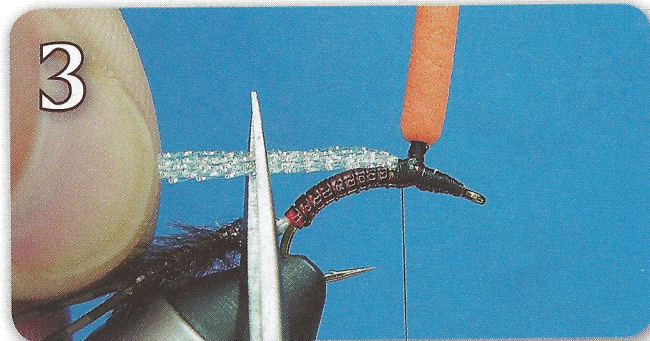
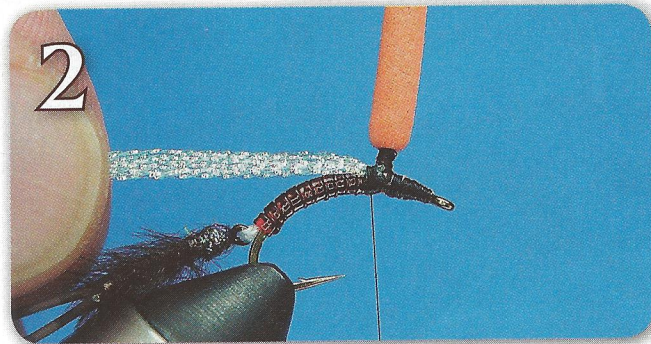
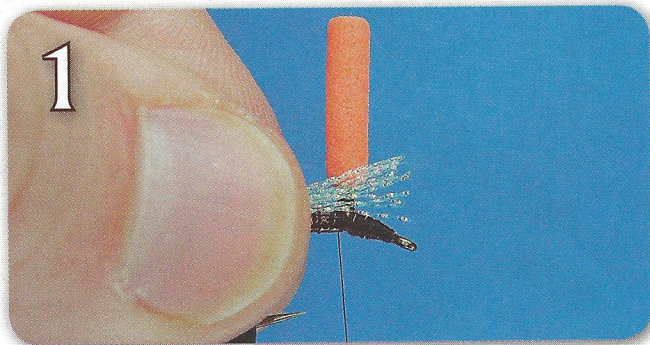
- 1 Tie the Midge Tubing to the far side of the hook.
- 2 Wrap the tubing up the hook shank. Tie off and clip the surplus tubing.
- 3 Pinch the foam post to the top of the hook; don't crowd the eye.
- 4 Tie the post to the hook.
- 5 Cock the post up. Wrap the thread up and down the base of the post; use firm pressure, but don't pull so hard that you cut into the foam. Leave the thread positioned behind the post.

**Bigger, more selective fish key in on the insects that are still working to get free of their shucks.**

fish came up to inspect the dry fly—and even bumped it with closed mouths—and then swam away. Cutthroat trout, as aggressive as they can be, are some of the most likely to give it this nose bump. One day a lightbulb went off in my head: what if I blended the nymph and adult stage of a larger insect into one fly? That's how my articulated dry fly was born.

### Creating the New Fly

I had a great platform of dry flies to work with, so I turned to my own patterns to begin the design process. I initially used a monofilament joint to create the articulated movement, and I tried various shuck materials. I experimented with different colors of glass beads and wire ribs to keep the trailing shuck in the water, and while they worked well, the ostrich herl breathes well and creates a natural look and feel; when wet, the material gives the shuck just enough weight to keep it beneath the surface without pulling the fly down. And I still love a multicolored wing post for enhanced visibility, but a foam post is ideal for the extended floating time and



## Make the Wing

- 1** Hold the flash on top of the hook behind the post with the butt ends protruding past the thread.
- 2** Tie the flash to the top of the hook behind the post using tight thread wraps.
- 3** Cut the underwing just past the end of the hook.
- 4** Clean and stack the hair for the wing; measure it so that it extends 1/8 inch beyond the underwing.
- 5** Switch hands and tie on the wing behind the post. Apply a small drop of superglue if the wing rolls around the hook; the glue will weld the hair into place.
- 6** Trim the butt ends of the wing.

the ability to pop it along the surface.

I use Dingle-berries to match *Hexagenia*, drakes, stoneflies, and Hendrickson hatches. Although it is rare that I will fish a single fly, the Dingle-berry allows me to fish multiple flies and represent multiple stages in a new way. Try fishing the Dingle-berry using a 9-foot-long, size 4X leader to reduce twisting when casting, but you can go lighter and longer if you are casting over more wary fish. I ordinarily will not use a dropper fly when fishing the Dingle-berry, but if you do need a dropper, tie it to the long tag coming from a blood knot, or tie a small piece of monofilament to the hook eye; do not tie the mono to the hook bend or do anything that will interfere with the natural movement of the Dingle-berry's trailing shuck. You can also adapt the Dingle-berry to imitate smaller insects; I have tied this pattern as small as a size 20 Blue-Winged Olive. 🍷

Vince Wilcox operates *Wiley's Flies*, in Rainbow Lake, New York. We are excited that Vince recently completed a book titled *Vince Wilcox's Naturally Artificial Flies*. This new volume, which is being published by the Lyons Press, will be part of the Fly Tyer library of great tying books.

## Completing the Dingle-berry

- 1 Add a pinch of dubbing to the thread and wrap the thorax.
- 2 Strip the excess fibers from the base of the hackle. Clip an additional  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch of fibers from the base of the hackle; the tiny barbs will prevent the feather from slipping out when you wrap the parachute hackle.
- 3 Tie the hackle to the far side of the hook and behind the post.
- 4 Tie the legs to the top of the hair wing behind the post. The legs should protrude beyond the front of the fly equal to the length of the hook shank; longer is better because you can always trim them later. Don't tie them on too tight because we will slide them into place in the following step.
- 5 Pull the legs down the sides of the fly into position. Make a couple of firm wraps to lock the legs in place.
- 6 Add another tiny pinch of dubbing to the thread. Wrap the dubbing over the base of the legs.
- 7 Make four to six wraps with the hackle up and then back down the post. Pull the hackle tight and secure the feather behind the post using several firm thread wraps.
- 8 Tie off and snip the thread. Pull the foam post up and clip it so that it is about  $\frac{1}{8}$  inch high. Here is our finished Dingle-berry!

