

Marsh Banger

with a Dropper

Tying instructions and background.

By John Mathews

Background:

Large Spring tides and seasonal King tides produce more tidal water than is needed for reds to enter the tidal marshes, sometimes up to two feet more water. Generally, calf to just above the knee tidal water depths in the marsh are optimal for sight fishing reds. When waters get deeper the reds become hard to spot and when you do spot one, they tend to disappear into the depths and leave one essentially blind casting to a ghost of a fish.

Several years ago SIFF had a guest speaker, Capt. Gary Dubinel, who spoke mainly about a fly fishing technique and product he created for getting a red fish's attention with a popper so he might see and eat a dropper fly. It worked so well that Flymen Fish Company now makes and carries his product. Subsequent to Gary's presentation, Tony Royal, of Bay Street Outfitters fame, told me about the guides being successful with reds on surface poppers, particularly during the fall shrimp season. These two shared experiences had me thinking about combining both and using the combo in the marsh environment. While in the course of over 500 wade trips for reds, I have only seen reds surface feed twice. Maybe this technique would get the attention of the ghost reds that I just never seemed to get a shot at once they disappeared.

Fall brought big tides and reds that disappeared into the depths. From my first use of the popper with a dropper, I had success. I would simply cast to the fish's last known address, pop the popper, twitch it, and repeat. In fact, about 50% of those fish responded by either hitting the popper or eating the dropper. These were all fish I would have never had a shot at before. This same combo also proved effective in and along the grass lines on the Broad river for both reds and trout.

The Evolution of the fly:

As with most things in my life, it's a matter of trial and error. This fly's beginning was that of a "Rattlin Pop'n cork" that was scaled down and modified so it could be cast on a 6-8 weight rod. This design was followed by a traditional popper with a leader tied in at the hook bend. Later, a foam body was introduced and tied on a 2 1/2" Fish shank with all of the material as well as the weed guard tied onto the shank. Finally came the articulated version with hook eye of the Fish Shank being thread wrapped shut and the weed guard still on the shank. This version has come about while writing these instructions and working with a 1 1/2" Fish Shank. Essentially, this current version can be fished 5 different ways with multiple colors of foam popper head and different tails. The only part of this fly that is not changeable is the deer body hair portion on the Fish Shank.

Tying Instructions;

This fly borrows from Bob Popovic's Bob's Banger, the Whistler, and Gary's Popper with a Fly Product. Variations on all three result in 5 variations of this fly to fish, a popper, an articulated popper, a Popper with a dropper fly, an articulated Whistler and a Whistler.

Marsh Popper Materials:

Hook: 1/0 or 2/0 Eagle Claw 254 O'Shaghensy

Weed Guard: 3 1/2" of 20# test titanium leader wire or 20# test Mason's hard mono, tier's choice

1 1/2" to 2" Fish Shank

1/2" or 5/8" Foam popper body cut in half to 3/4" length

White buck tail

Pearl Crystal flash

Medium metallic hackle

Red deer body hair

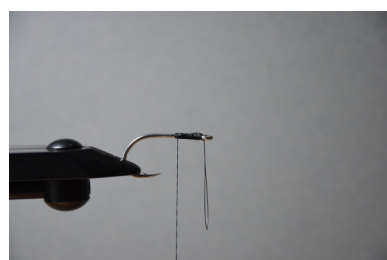
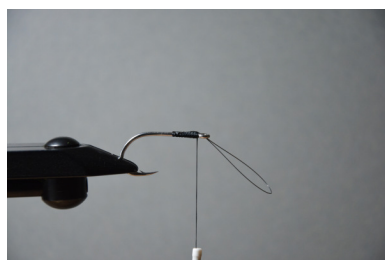
Danville 210 denier thread-red, chartreuse or white

Dropper Materials;

30" of 15-20 pound test mono or fluorocarbon leader.

Dropper fly pattern - in my life, it's your choice, shrimp, crab, baitfish

Instructions:



1. Place hook in vise shank up, point side down.
2. Dress hook from eye to about 1/3 of the shank and leave the thread hanging there.
3. From the bottom of the hook, insert one end of the wire weed guard material through the eye and secure it to the hook shank with a couple of wraps. The end of the wire should be at the same place you ended the thread wraps in step 2.
4. Repeat step 3 and wrap the thread forward to the hook eye.
5. Pull the wire loop that formed back to the hook point and make 5-7 thread wraps between the eye of the hook and the base of the wire loop. This should bring the wire loop to a 90 degree of the hook shanks. If not, add or remove wraps to do so. Tie off.



6. Cut a pencil size clump of white deer hair from the tail and trim it to a 3 1/2" length. Place the butt ends of the clump at the eye of the hook and make several wraps around the clump to secure it. Now use your thumb to push the hair around all of the hook and secure it to the front 1/3 of the hook shank (same as the amount wraps of the hook as in step 2.)

7. Tie in 3 to 4 strands of crystal flash on each side of the deer hair
8. With the thread in the step 2 position, tie in the metallic hackle. Advance the thread to the eye of the hook and then make about 4 tight wraps of the hackle, brushing back the hackle barbs with each wrap, ending at the eye. Secure the hackle and tie off the thread with half hitches or whip finish. Cut the thread. You're now done with the tail/Whistler portion of this fly.

Fish Shank portion:



9. Open the snap end of the Fish Shank to receive the hook eye of the tail you just tied and insert the hook eye into the snap with the hook point down and the Fish Shank snap eye opening up.
10. Tie a small loop on the end of the leader material with a double overhand loop knot. Trim the tag end and insert the Fish Shank snap end through the loop. You can also attach the dropper leader with a uni-knot. (At this point the white buck tail fly and the leader material loop are both secured in the snap loop of the Fish Shank.)
11. Now clamp the snap eye of the Fish Shank in your vice with the fly hanging down, the Fish Shank eye opening up.
12. Place a rubber band over the post of your vise and pull it forward and place it in the gap of the hook and release it. This will pull the hook back and out of your way.
13. Start wrapping the Fish Shank just in front of the end of the wire that forms the shank's hook eye and wrap forward to 3/4" from the eye of the Fish Shank eye. This should be where the foam popper head ends when inserted on the Fish Shank. DO NOT wrap thread over the two wire portions that form the hook eye



14. Cut a bundle of Red Deer body hair about 3/4 of a pencil diameter and 2 1/2" long being sure to square the butt ends. At the mid way point of the thread wraps tie in the body hair starting with 2 loose wraps 3/4" from the butt ends. Hold the bundle in place on top of the Fish Shank and pull up with the thread. The butt ends should flare outward. Now take 5-6 tight wraps at the same spot holding the bundle on top of the shank.



15. Slide the foam popper head onto the Fish Shank and push it up against the flared deer hair butts till the butt ends are at a 90 degree angle to the shank.

16 Now pull the thread forward through the butt ends and make 8-12 tight wraps up against the flared butt ends. Half hitch or whip finish. You are now through with the Fish Shank portion of this fly.

17. Slide the popper head onto the Fish Shank DO NOT GLUE it and the articulated Marsh Banger is now complete.



18. Tie on a shrimp or bait fish pattern as your dropper fly.