

How About a Spinner Suitable for Fly Fishing?

Fly fishers rarely use spinners. Off-the-shelf spinners are too heavy and require a steady fast retrieve. The only ones feasible for fly fishing use a small metal spinner attached with a clevis. But these are hard to fly fish with, causing a bump at the end of the back cast and requiring a faster than comfortable retrieve to maintain the spin.

Even so, I've caught lots of fish with them and that's kept me interested in trying to come up with a spinner suitable for fly fishing. It took a blunder to finally get a light weight, low inertia, spinner.

Bait Casters rate Spinners along with plastic worms, top water poppers, and crank baits as their most effective lures. Spinners not only act as attractors they are agitators also. They put out a wake that imparts random motion to trailing parts of a lure. Some Spinner Baits are huge lures with 2 or 3 metal flashers above and hooks galore below; all adorned with rubber legs or gaudy flashy trailer things; cost like crazy too! Others are small in-line lures with something that looks like fluff on the hook. And they all catch fish. In fact, every so often you will come across an article which describes some form of spinner bait as the most successful of all the bait



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caster lures. Of course, if you wait long enough, you'll read the same for worms, poppers and cranks; gotta keep all the manufacturers happy you know.

Light weight, low inertia spinners would make a great addition to the fly fishers arsenal. And, what's wrong with stealing technology from the bait casters. But there are some demanding

requirements for a fly fishing spinner:

First it must be small and light; none of those huge heavy metal conglomerations that the bait casters use. Even small metal spoons and clevises are too heavy. Heavy stuff just isn't the thing for fun fly fishing.

Secondly it has to be something that works with the irregular retrieval speed used with fly gear. Fly fisher persons don't use reels with 5/1 gear ratios that rip the lure through the water. Stripping the line in at high speed with the rod held between your legs is not much fun. The fly fishing spinner must have little inertia and spin up rapidly.

And thirdly, it has to be designed so it doesn't wrap up the leader with its spinning and cause those horrible rat's

nest we've all had to deal with on our worser days. The bait casters get around this problem with swivels. But conventional swivels are too heavy for fun fly fishing.

Difficult parameters.

And then one day I had a break through; one of those wonderful mistakes that make up for all those dumb ones that end up in the trash basket. Good things sometimes come from mistakes. You're looking for one thing and find another. I was trying to make a lip out of a sequin glued to a bugle bead. It would be a module that I would slide on the line upstream of the hook that would hopefully make the arrangement wobble. It wasn't a good job, the bead was a bit off center and canted. By mistake I put it on the line backwards. I let out a blast of air and said something like, "aw poop"—and the dang thing spun like a run away propeller. Walla, the light weight spinner. Because a sequin is paper thin and a short bugle bead weighs next to nothing I had the low weight/inertia spinner I'd been looking for.

The best way to use the spinner in making fly fishing lures is to use the module approach. A 6 inch piece of 10 lb mono, knotted at both ends is the center piece. Everything rides on it. You start off with a poor man's swivel—a small bead. It won't come off the line because of the knot. You attach the lure to the fly line leader by threading the fly line leader through the bead and then tying a knot. It holds the

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lure to the leader but prevents rotation from the lure being imparted to the leader, thus preventing any rat's nest. Next comes the spinner, made of a sequin glued at an angle to a bugle bead and then covered with fabric paint. Then comes a lure body, usually separated from the spinner with a bearing bead. You can have as many body modules as you want and you may or may not separate them with beads. The possibilities are endless. One of those modules of course has to be the hook (strung and bent so that it rides backwards and is weed resistant). The hook can be the final module or there can be a tail module, usually adorned with fluff or hair. I've just broken the surface on all the possibilities of combinations.

Figures 1-3 show 3 of my current spinner designs. They all cast good and their actions look great in the swimming pool. They spin up with the slightest motion. The poor man's swivel works great and prevents any line tangle. And they look halfway

decent. Figure 2 has an additional fluff module in front of the hook and behind the hackle module. Fluff is mounted on the top of a chunk of foam threaded on the mono at the bottom. It will float fluff up so it won't tangle with the hook which will ride point up below it.

stopper bead. Then comes a hackle module separated from the hook by a separator bead and from the spinner by a bearing bead. Barely shown in front of the spinner is the poor man's swivel bead. Not shown is the upstream knot that keeps everything from coming off the front end. This spinner does show it's wear. There is a kink in the line and I've had to rebuild the paint job but it still spins and I'm going to use it until it fails.



Fig #2

Otherwise this module is similar to the first one except it has 2 beads for it's poor man's swivel (I've found one is adequate).

Figure 3 is like Figure 2 except it has another hackle module in it's mix. I haven't had the time to try out either of the latter 2 flugs but Joe Bain did catch a trout with a flug like Figure 2. I don't

know whether there is any advantage to multiple modules or not. But they do thrash around more. Also, when the spinner of the flug of Figure 3 spins up, both of the hackle modules spin too. That's cool (I think!)

Well there you go. You should give this spinner a look. I had great days at all the local lakes and in Montana and the Southeast with the old heavier design. They were my most effective baits even if they weren't much fun to cast and required that fast retrieve. This new design corrects the thud at the end of the back cast and allows for the slower irregular retrieve characteristic with fly fishing. It's ideal for tubing.

The 911 Bunch of Joe Bain, Raymond Sewell and myself have tried them on a few outings. Joe caught a trout on the first outing and I caught a bass and 10 trout (one a 20 incher) on the second — of course it didn't hurt that they'd planted the day before. It was like shooting fish in a barrel. I used just

1 lure for the 2 1/2 hours I fished, the same lure I'd used for about an hour the previous week. That exposure proves the viability and durability of the spinner and poor man's swivel. Everything worked fine. But don't think these things are anything more than just one

more way to fly fish. Two weeks later



Fig #1

decent.

Figure 1 is my 11 fish spinner flug. I've used it for 3 1/2 of fishing. The #10 hook is painted with fabric paint to look like a crawfish. It's held on by a



Fig #3

I got skunked fishing with the Wed Bunch trying to catch crappy for Gary Hilbers. Fly fishing is so humbling—but there is always the next time!!!!

