
THE TYING BENCH

ANOTHER CLOUSER?

The Clouser Floating Minnow by *Charlie Most*



Clouser Floating Minnows tied by Charlie Most

Say “Clouser” to a fellow SFF member and images of barbell eyes, upside down hooks, and long fibers suggesting a minnow body come to mind. Clouser’s Deep Minnow is one of the deadliest flies ever developed. But Bob Clouser’s ingenuity did not stop there. He developed another minnow fly that is easier to cast, floats so it’s more fun to use, and in shallower water is every bit as deadly as his Deep Minnow. Logically called Clouser’s Floating Minnow, it’s a fly that works well for river smallmouth bass, largemouth bass, and should be great at enticing snook out of the mangroves.

Clouser’s genius shows here too. Instead of using cork or balsa wood, he just glued two closed-cell foam bluegill spider bodies to each side of the hook shank. I think the slight but positive buoyancy of these bodies is key to this fly’s success. It seems to struggle to stay at the surface creating a helpless stance that just draws strikes. And it’s simple to tie. Lash on small bunches of bucktail, synthetic fibers, calf tail or whatever for the wings, add some red fibers on the underside to suggest gills, and then glue on back to back foam spider bodies. It’s like a combination of fly tying and model airplanes building!

I found what I consider the right hook for this fly through a Mustad company goof. I had several of their 25-hook packs labeled “stingers.” But the first one I opened looked different from regular “stingers.”

It had a very long shank curving gracefully into a classic “sproat” bend. I used these so-called stingers to make my first Clouser Floating Minnows and they worked beautifully. When my original 25-hook pack was exhausted, I went looking for more.

Nothing in the Mustad catalog seemed right but then I noticed what they call a “central draught” hook which is close to what I was looking for except for a “bent back” kink a quarter shank or so back from the eye. The size designation is also different with a size 24 correlating with a regular 1/0 hook, etc. Since that kink could be straight-



Central Draught hook before and after straightening with foam body halves.

ened, I ordered four sizes of the hook from Bill Jackson’s. But be careful with the straightening since the factory kink is sharp and can break. In fact, even using round-nosed, wire bending pliers, I broke one out of every six or seven straightened.

Then Jim Swann said just heat the hook, straighten it, and then re-temper. Now why didn’t I think of that? Why all this fuss just over a hook? This fly simulates an injured or sick baitfish, and therefore an easy meal for any nearby fish. Clouser recommended a regular length shank. I am convinced the longer shank of the central draught hook makes the fly dangle at a steeper angle to better suggest a baitfish in distress.

My foam bodies came from Angler’s Supply House in Williamsport, PA (1-800-326-6612 for a catalog). They come in packs of 10 or 100. The most useful sizes are 241F (size 4 hooks) through 244F (size 1/0). They cost .60 to .80 cents for 10, or \$3.35 to \$5.50 for the 100 packs. Get them in white since felt tip markers can add any color.

Clouser Floating Minnow continued

With hooks, foam bodies, winging material, and some super glue (I use Zap-a-Gap super glue CA), you're all set make these flies.

Attach the thread right behind the hook eye and wrap back as far as the foam bodies will reach. Lash some red material on the bottom of the shank just forward of the rearmost thread wraps. Krystal Flash or any red fibers will work.

Now tie down the winging materials while wrapping forward with the thread. Keep them on top of the shank and towards the rear of the body area. Whip finish those wraps and starting just behind the hook eye apply superglue over the wraps back to the tie down point *on one side only*. Quickly place the flat side of a foam body, with the squared-off thicker end to the front, against the glue and push firmly. The hook eye should be at the center of the squared-off end of the body with the shank exiting below the pointed end at the back.

Now quickly look directly down the hook from the front and make sure the body is aligned vertically with the hook and the winging material as the superglue dries in seconds. Now repeat this step on the other side, sighting from the side to make sure one body is lined up with the other.

Now you have gaps between the body halves at the top and the bottom. Use tweezers or some forceps for the next step.

Using the superglue spout, lay a bead inside the top gap, then use the tweezers to squeeze this gap closed. Use the same steps to close the bottom gap. Be careful here; you can easily glue your fingers to the bug body and have to tear it up to get free. The basic idea is to keep your fingers or any tools away from the gaps as the glue might squeeze out. If you want a two-tone head to match a bi-color wing, color it first with felt tip markers. Super glue can seal the foam so the color will not take.

Adhesive-backed eyes add a finishing touch. Just stick them on, following up with a bead of super glue around the outer rim.

This fly is so quiet on the water, even during the retrieve, as to be hardly noticeable. It's not a fly for windy days unless you're in a quiet cove. But on quiet days, just cast to likely holding spots and fish it with very little action. Any nearby fish knows it's there, and fish seldom pass up what seems an easy meal.....CM

YOU CAN'T PUSH A CHAIN

by Terry Kirkpatrick

"You can't push a chain." It gets a chuckle because we know it's true. You can't push a fly line either.

Think about it. You "pull" your back cast off the water. You're applying force and the fly line wants to stay where it is. (Inertia) The arbitrator is your rod. It bends to absorb the excess energy you apply to start the line moving. When you stop, the rod continues to pull until it straightens out, sending the line back over your shoulder.

The line wants to continue to travel in the direction you convinced it to go. You want it to stop eventually. Once again, the rod bends accepting the energy of the line and holding it.

When the line has almost completely turned over, behind you, you start "pulling" it forward. Not only does the rod have the bend in it from the back cast, it bends even more as you again apply energy to overcome inertia. The rod will continue to bend as you apply more and more energy with your smooth forward cast. It will quit bending and start to transfer energy to the line the moment you stop accelerating your cast.

Accelerating. That's one of the key words. When you quit putting more pressure on the line than it takes to move at the speed it's moving, you've stopped casting. Even if you only slow down, the rod will start to return the stored energy to the line. A smooth acceleration to a sudden stop is what all the books on casting say. And this is why.

Of course we shouldn't think of any of this when we're on the water. But it is worth considering the next time you're practicing.