

Tying Bench Layne Smith Ties Lou Tabory's Snake Fly



If I see mullet pushing water in the shallows, this is the first fly I'll tie on. Tabory's books are absolutely chock full of good information and I highly recommend them along with his snake fly. I like to tie snake flies on short shank hooks and I found Mustad C68SZ work particularly well. For this fly I'm using a 2/0. Because of the spun deer hair head, I like to use heavy tying thread. Danville Flatwaxed Nylon on a large bobbin allows me to apply a lot of pressure to the wraps.

Materials

Hook: Mustad C68SZ, or Gamakatsu SL12S size 2/0

Thread: Danville Flatwaxed Nylon white

Tail: White Ostrich herl

Flash: Silver Krystal Flash and Pearl Flashabou

Body: White marabou, wrapped

Collar: White deer hair, stacked

Head: White deer hair, spun

Adhesive: FletchTite Platinum, Zap-A-Gap or favorite CA Cement

Tying Instructions

Step 1: Start your tying thread at about the hook point and work your way back to secure it to the hook. Snip 5 or 6 ostrich herls free from one side of the stem. Measure them to form a tail 2 to 3 times as long as the hook and tie them in on top of the shank.

Step 2: For flash, just a few strands of silver crystal flash, doubled over, and then attached to the top of the hook seems to be enough. You can do the same with 2 or 3 strands of flashabou as well. This adds that iridescent fishy look to the pattern. Top these with 5 or 6 more strands of ostrich herl.

Step 3: Marabou goes on next, and if properly tied in, adds a ton of motion to the fly. Plumes or blood quills will work. Strip the nasties off the stem to leave about a two-inch marabou segment. Leave enough room at the butt to attach hackle pliers. Find the tip and pull the fibers back to expose the stem. Then snip the tip off. While still holding the fibers back, tie the feather onto the hook shank. This will result in a surprisingly robust connection. Even so, be gentle with this next step as marabou stems are fairly delicate.

Step 4: Get a grip of the butt end with hackle pliers and pull the feather up. Using the back of your scissors, rub the stem which will help to point the marabou fibers rearward. Pull the fibers back more with your thumb and index finger. Wetting your fingertips really helps this process. Then begin wrapping the marabou in a spiral around the hook shank, pulling the fibers back as you go. Although this process might seem time consuming, I feel it's really worth it in the overall look and action of the fly.

Step 5: Tie the stem off with a couple of good tight wraps and then reorient any fibers that have gone astray. With that done you can snip the tip off close and give a few finishing wraps.

Tying instructions for Smitty's version of the Tabory Snake Fly continues on the next page

Continued... Tying Bench Smitty ties the Tabory Snake Fly

Step 6: Now here's the fun part. Snip a clump of white deer hair, about a pencil's width in diameter. So it will spin correctly, fan and remove the fuzzies from the butt ends. Flicking them often helps to shake the fuzzies loose. Use a large diameter hair stacker to even the tips and then carefully remove them from the stacker. Place them on the top of the hook shank so the tips extend just beyond the bend of the hook. While squeezing your thumb and index finger, take a single wrap and work it down under pressure. Take a second wrap to flare the deer hair even further and then take one more for good measure.

Step 7: Then run your thread through the butt ends at a 45-degree angle and pull tight to lock the bundle into place. Now, I like to add a few loose wraps behind my initial wraps to decrease the flare on the rearward pointing tips. Although this isn't necessary, I like the way it looks. Now run your thread forward with a couple of wraps. Advance your thread to in front of the deer hair as best you can and use a ball point pen with it's guts removed or a similar tube to push back and pack the deer hair. Then take wraps of thread in front to build up a dam to hold the hair back.

Step 8: Snip another similar sized clump of deer hair and repeat the fanning, flicking and plucking procedure to get rid of the fuzzies. Then snip the tips off the deer hair. On this one, you want to really spin the deer hair so take one wrap and then on the second wrap, ease up on your fingertip pressure and allow the hair to spin around the hook shank. The hair should stop spinning as you take another wrap or two. Once again, pack the deer hair rearward and take wraps to form a dam in front. Repeat this whole procedure until you have spun deer hair all the way up to just behind the hook eye. How many clumps you need will depend on how long your hook shank is.

Step 9: Now, here's a weird little trick that allows you to finish the head of the fly without trapping a lot of hairs. When you're ready to finish the head, push the fibers back and hold them in place. Take a bunch of wraps, trying your best not to trap hair as you go. Repeat the process until you're no longer trapping hair. While holding the hair back, apply a small amount of zap-a-gap to your tying thread with your bodkin. Then take a few wraps with the thread. Using a knife or scissors, you can now cut the tying thread free without it unraveling.

Step 10: To trim the head to shape, I like to first cut the bottom hair off flat and parallel to the hook shank and then go from there. I've seen all different shapes and I think this really is a matter of preference.

Step 11: Now, to really seal your final thread wraps, add head cement all the way around, and I like to add head cement to the flat part of the head to lock it in place and make the fly more durable.

Step 12: The final fly should look something like this (photo at right). Although some people like them in olive, others prefer chartreuse, straight white has always worked well for me.

Smitty

