

# Badger Fly Fishers

*An Active Member Club of the Federation of Fly Fishers*



Newsletter

July 2010

## Join us for club picnic and casting clinic *See details on back page*



# Perfect Poppers for the Topwater Bite

*Making poppers is a great way to get into fly tying, and it's easier than you think*

by Ward Bean

One of the best times to fly fish is when the bass and panfish are feeding on the surface. Fishing with a popper provides a heady and exciting angling experience. Seeing and hearing your lure pop and gurgle across the water, followed by an explosive strike, is about as good as it gets.

You can find commercially made poppers in the bins of most fly shops, but they cost four or five

bucks apiece. No self-respecting fly tier is going to stand for that, so the best bet is to make your own. You have a couple of options for building poppers. First, you can carve, sand, and Shape popper bodies out of cork, balsa, or foam blocks, then paint and seal them with acrylic paint and varnish.

This entire process requires considerable skill, special tools, paints, and brushes. It's also tedious and time-consuming work, taking hours To accomplish. Or, you can build poppers the easy way, as I do,

by using ready-made bodies painted with waterproof markers and sealed with nail polish.

I construct poppers in three stages. The first stage involves welding the premade popper body to a hook with superglue.



Continued on next page

**President**

Walt Stevenson  
(608) 231-3163  
[wrs@plantpath.wisc.edu](mailto:wrs@plantpath.wisc.edu)

**Vice President**

Gene Knutson  
(608) 238-1674  
[bjknuts1@facstaff.wisc.edu](mailto:bjknuts1@facstaff.wisc.edu)

**Treasurer**

Lynn Langenfeld  
(608) 938-4142  
[lynn.langenfeld52@gmail.com](mailto:lynn.langenfeld52@gmail.com)

**Secretary**

Ted Lauf  
(608) 233-2102  
[tlauf@att.net](mailto:tlauf@att.net)

**Board Member**

Bob Harrison  
(608) 233-7480  
[twoperfectdogs@yahoo.com](mailto:twoperfectdogs@yahoo.com)

**Board Member**

Bill Engber  
(608) 238-4374  
[engber@orthorehab.wisc.edu](mailto:engber@orthorehab.wisc.edu)

**Board Member**

Tom Smith  
(608) 204-9903  
[t.e.smith@charter.net](mailto:t.e.smith@charter.net)

**Board Member**

Michael Rock  
(608) 437-8939  
[mrock-ingleside@charter.net](mailto:mrock-ingleside@charter.net)

**Board Member**

Dan Johnson  
(608) 233-6518  
[johnson7@tds.net](mailto:johnson7@tds.net)

The second step involves attaching molded plastic eyes, applying appropriate colors using waterproof markers, and then sealing the body with Sinful Colors fingernail polish. The final stage involves attaching the tail materials, wrapping a soft-hackle skirt, and sewing rubber legs through the body.

It takes less than 30 minutes from the time you clamp the hook in the vise until you place the finished popper in your fly box. If you use a production-line approach by first gluing several popper bodies to a bunch of hooks and proceeding from there, you can crank out half a dozen poppers in a couple of hours.

### Getting the Goods

Several manufacturers offer pre-formed popper bodies. I prefer the soft-foam, tapered, cupped, and slotted bodies, called Perfect Popper bodies, distributed by Wapsi Fly. Perfect Popper bodies come 10 to a pack in four different sizes, and retail for about four bucks. The size 6 body is just right for a size 2 Mustad 3366 bassbug hook, and the smaller size 8 body fits nicely on a size 4 hook. If your local fly shop doesn't stock them, go to [www.Wapsifly.com](http://www.Wapsifly.com) to find a dealer that does carry them. (Note: The author's instructions also work when using other brands of pre-made foam popper bodies.)

Using waterproof marking pens is the most efficient way to color a popper body. There are three brands of waterproof markers available in most craft and office supply stores: Sharpie, Prismacolor, and Copic.

Any one of them will do the job, but I prefer Prismacolor and Copic pens because they have a wide tip on one end for broad strokes and a fine tip on the other end for detailed work. I don't spend a lot of time painting popper bodies, preferring to paint most of them a solid color.

If you have an artistic flair, go for it, and use as many different colors, spots, and stripes as you like. But remember, the fish see only the bottom of a popper, so all the artsy stuff you do on the top is of no consequence to them.

Your effort to give the body froglike spots might impress your friends, though.

Once the popper body is painted and the adhesive-backed eyes are in place, I apply two coats of Sinful Colors Opal Glitter nail enamel as a sealer. Opal Glitter dries quickly and gives the body a bright, durable, fish-scale appearance. You can purchase Sinful Colors nail enamel at any Walgreens or almost any large discount pharmacy or retailer.

### Polishing Off Your Popper

After completing the head, but before installing the tail assembly, you might want to consider adding a weed guard. To attach a simple single-loop weed guard, cut a three-inch-long piece of hard monofilament about equal to the diameter of the hook shank. Tie it to the top of the shank slightly beyond the hook bend. You should also position the popper body slightly behind the hook eye to expose enough shank to tie down the tip of the Weed guard when finishing the fly.

Continued on next page

The Badger Fly Fishers Newsletter is published monthly. Articles, photos, information, and calendar events for the newsletter are encouraged and should be submitted by the 1st day of the month of issue to: Dan Johnson, 426 Glenway St., Madison WI 53711. If possible, Word files sent to: [johnson7@tds.net](mailto:johnson7@tds.net) are most appreciated.

You'll complete the weed guard after tying on the tail of the popper.

Make the tail assembly using almost any synthetic or natural materials, including Flashabou, Krystal Flash, craft fur, calftail hair, chicken feathers, deer hair, and bucktail. I prefer simple tails on my poppers made using marabou and a few strands of rubber, and a soft hen neck feather for the skirt. Those three materials give the popper more movement and action in the water than do other materials.

No popper is complete without rubber legs. Leg material is available in a variety of colors and sizes; some even have stripes.



You can make a neat little device to sew rubber legs through the body. First, clip a six-inch-long piece of 3X tippet material, and thread the monofilament through the eye of a sewing needle that is just large enough to accommodate it. Next, tie both ends together to create a three-inch loop, and trim the tag ends.

To sew the rubber legs through the popper, push the needle through the body at an angle, insert the tip

end of the rubber leg in the mono loop, and pull the loop through the body with the leg in tow. Adjust the leg material so you have two legs of equal length. Next, insert the needle and a second piece of rubber legs through the body at an opposite angle to the first set of legs so that they form an X through the middle of the popper's body.

Wapsi Fly also offers Perfect Pencil Popper bodies in two sizes: 1

and 4. A size 4 body matched with a size 4 Mustad 9674 streamer hook makes a perfect offering when bass are chasing baitfish.

Finally, many smallmouth anglers swear by the famous Sneaky Pete slider. To make your own slider, simply reverse the Perfect Popper head on the hook, the rounded end should face forward. Paint it chartreuse, add molded eyes and rubber legs, and tie on a tail and skirt.

If you want to fish poppers but don't want to spend hours making them, try the Perfect Popper, which is inexpensive, quick, and easy to build. Best of all, the Perfect Popper looks and acts great in the water.

*Ward Bean is an Iowa fly fisher/tyer, educator, and author. Visit his website for more informative articles.*  
[www.warmwaterflytyer.com](http://www.warmwaterflytyer.com)



**Come to the club picnic!**  
**Saturday, July 31st**  
**Beginning at 10:00 a.m.**  
**Lake Marion in Mazomanie**

*Plus a free casting clinic by a top instructor!*

Lake Marion Pond is on Cty. KP, south of Hwy. 14 just west of the village. We have reserved the shelter.

As a special bonus this year, we've asked Lou Jirikowic, Sage Casting instructor, to put on his highly regarded casting clinic for our BFF members and their guests.

A retired teacher and guide, Lou is one of the most sought after casting instructors around. He has been teaching casting for over 50 years and will offer both group and individual lessons. Here's your opportunity to learn from the master - at no charge to you!

Intermediate and advanced level casters can correct those casting errors that have plagued us for too long, or if you're new to the sport, here's an opportunity to get the foundation casts down before you develop bad habits.

Rods and reels are available for use or you can bring your own

The casting clinic begins at 10:00 and goes until noon, then will start up again at 1:00 and end at 2:00. The picnic lunch begins at noon.

All food and soft drinks are provided. No alcohol is permitted in the park.

Both the casting clinic and the noon lunch are free to all BFF members and their guests.

Please RSVP to Walt Stevenson at [wrs@plantpath.wisc.edu](mailto:wrs@plantpath.wisc.edu) or 231-3163 so that we can get a head count for a picnic lunch of brats, chips, salad and soft drinks. Please contact Walt if you plan to attend either the casting clinic, the noon lunch or both.

We'll serve lunch at noon and continue more casting for those interested after lunch. It should be a fun day for the club.

See you there.

## Events Calendar

- 7/31/10 Club picnic
- 9/27/10 John Beth, Tributary Fishing
- 10/25/10 Mike Goeser, Alaska
- 11/22/10 Election of officers
- 12/14/10 Christmas party with Wisconsin Smallmouth Alliance