

Flyfishing

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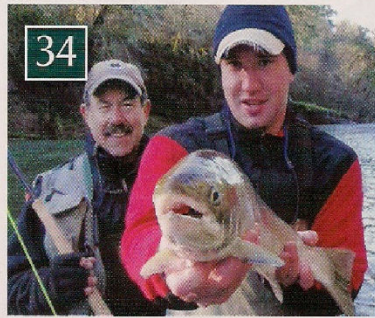
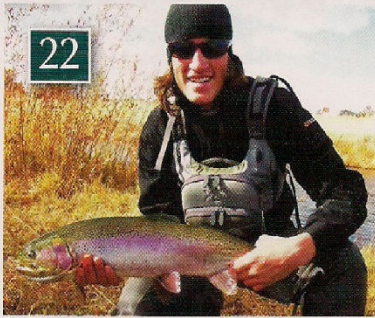
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The Evolution of *Articulation*

Part Two: Articulated Leeches and More

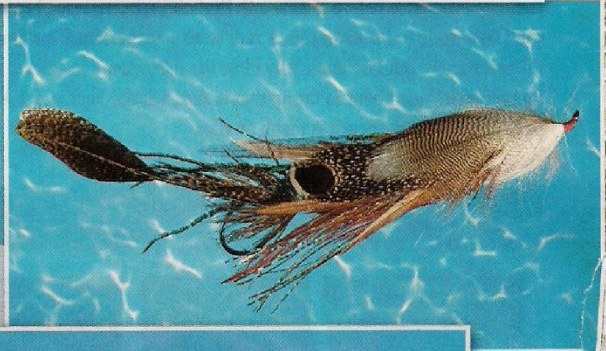
By Kevin Erickson

Articulated Leeches have an enticing swimming motion that few fish can resist. This action is due to the unconventional tying techniques used in these modern patterns. Let's look at what makes them unique.

When you watch a leech swim in the water, they have a very wavy "snake-like" undulating motion that's tough to mimic. The first attempts to match this motion were to tie a comparatively long tail off the back of the main body of the fly. A "stinger" or trailing rear hook was added. It is attached to the front hook with a loop of strong flexible material like braided Dacron, commonly used for fly-reel backing. It extends back to or near the end of the tail. The main body is then constructed on a shorter-shanked hook and the bend of the front hook is cut off. This design provides good action within the fly. It can swim and move well with the current as the trailing hook is almost as flexible as the materials themselves. Here are some examples of this style in addition to the Leech:

The downside to this construction is that often the trailing material can get wrapped or twisted around the trailing, or even the front, hook when casting. How to fix this? Enter Derek Fergus. Derek is a long-time Northwest steelhead fly-fishing guide and industry sales representative with a creative flair for new fly designs. He conceived a solution both simple and effective.

He first showed it to me in 2002 when I was still working at Kaufmann's Streamborn in Tigar, Oregon. The design was new and had a unique appearance and outstanding motion. This was going to be a fish catcher if ever I'd seen one. His idea was to wrap the material for the body of the fly around the "string" core. This allowed for a very flexible fly of virtually any length without the tangling problems of other designs. And so was born the M.O.A.L.—the "Mother Of All Leeches." The design is simple and definitely proven to be an effective fish catcher. This is a great style for virtually any fish in either fresh or salt water. Tie up a few for your next trip and give them a try—YOU'LL be hooked!



Derek Fergus MOAL (Mother Of All Leeches) Leech

Rear Hook: "Octopus" style short-shank hook, size 2 to 6.

Rear Body Core: High-strength fine-diameter braided line, i.e. braided Dacron (fly-reel backing), Firewire, etc. attached to front body shank with folded wraps and looped back to extend back to the rear hook location.

Core Adhesive: Tear Mender (a strong flexible adhesive.)

Thread: Red.

Rear Body Wrap: Cross-cut rabbit strips or other natural furs on the skin, or experiment with long-fibered synthetics yarns as well. Possibilities are endless.

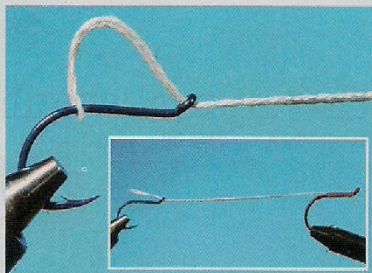
Front Body Shank: Conventional hook with bend cut off after completion.

Optional: Bead chain, lead eyes or cone heads on the front body shank.



Step 1: Attach the front body shank hook in the vise. Wrap your thread around the middle of the shank and then back to a position above the point.

Select a length of the rear body core material and measure it to be twice the length of the finished fly. Fold it over to form a loop and insert the cut ends through the eye of the hook. *This is important.* The material *must* go through the eye to provide a strong connection that won't pull out. Tie the cut ends securely to the hook. Trim and cover with a few additional thread wraps. Tie off the thread and cut off the excess.



Step 2: Grab the hook for the rear of the fly. Pull the loop taut and roll the folded end to form a point. Insert this into the eye of the hook and slide the hook forward. Open the loop and bring the hook back through this now open loop.

Now set up the second vise to the right of the first vise about 6" to 8" apart and pointing the opposite direction—jaws pointing to the left for right-handed tiers.

Release the front body shank hook from the first vise and secure in the second vise with the eye still pointing to the right. Next secure the rear hook in the first vise. Reverse this setup for left-handed tiers.



Step 3: While the body core loop on the rear hook is still open, insert the end of the rabbit strip into it and leave about 1/2" to 1" extending past. Derek said this helps act like a "kicker" and provides additional action when fishing.

Now position the vises so the rear body core is taut. The goal is to pull the rear body core loop tight between the hooks for the remaining steps and to secure the rabbit strip.



Step 4: Attach the tying thread to the front body shank hook. Apply a coating of Tear Mender adhesive to the core. It's thin and runs quickly; a bodkin helps to spread it as needed. This sets in five minutes, so be ready to proceed right away.

Next *tightly* wrap the rabbit strip forward. The fibers should be pointing to the rear of the fly as you wrap the skin forward. Once up to the front shank hook, continue forward and wrap around it as well and tie off with the tying thread near the eye.

Kevin W. Erickson worked as a full-time professional in the flyfishing business for over 25 years. He outfitted anglers, booked flyfishing trips worldwide and still teaches fly-casting and tying classes for all skill levels. He has traveled extensively and acted as host of angling groups to both fresh and saltwater destinations around the globe.

His fly tying has been featured in multiple publications, including Randy Stetzer's bestseller Flies: The Best 1000. He currently has a "real" job in the software industry in Beaverton, Oregon.



Step 5: Attach any eyes as desired, whip finish, cement the wraps and you're done.

When you release the fly from the vise, it will untwist a bit. This is normal. Once the fly is out of the vise, use a strong pair of dykes to cut off the front hook close to the last wraps, but not too close. Give these a try in a variety of colors. Wrap two different color strips together for a "barber pole" look.

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