

Fort Worth Fly Fishers

July Fly of the Month

Tomsu's Supreme Hopper



It looks like summer is finally headed our way, and with the warmer weather comes the opportunity to try fly fishing with terrestrial insect patterns. Whether you're fishing for trout in some vacation spot or just looking for bass and bluegills in our local ponds, terrestrial patterns like the grasshopper pattern shown here are just the ticket. This can be fished standalone (it floats like a cork) or fished tandem in a classic hopper/dropper configuration. With warmer weather usually comes a bumper crop of grasshoppers that seem to always have unfortunate specimens that get blown into the water, ripe for a protein packed meal for some hungry waiting fish. A hopper pattern in those conditions might just surprise a gorgeous fish.

There are probably thousands of hopper patterns out there, but I've chosen to show one of my favorites which is created using the River Road Tomsu's Supreme Hopper Body cutter set. This set of cutters comes with four cutters (body, wing, leg, pronotum) in a handy wooden carrying case. For those of you wondering, the pronotum is a prominent plate-like structure that covers all or part of the thorax of some insects.



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Hook - standard dry fly hook like the TMC 100 - size 4 - 12

Thread - 6-0 flat waxed Danville, color to match the pattern

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Front Legs - rubber legs, color to complement the pattern.

Body, Back Legs, Pronotum - 2mm foam, cut with the River Road cutter sets (the sets are available in sizes 4 -1 2, the example is tied in size 8. Pick a foam color to closely match the grasshopper you see where you intend to fish. You'll need two body halves, two back legs and one pronotum (note the cutter cuts one half the pattern so you need to either fold the foam or make two cuts).



Wings - Any thin wing material, like Montana Fly Company MFC Etha-Wing or River Road River Foam, cut with the Tomsu Wing Cutter.

Underwing (optional) - Elk hair or deer hair, color to complement the hopper

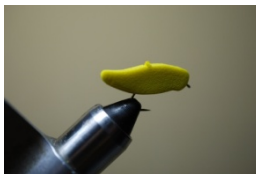
1.) Create a thread base that goes from just behind the eye to the start of the bend of the hook.



2.) Add a bead of super glue to both sides of the thread base and press one of the body halves onto the hook. Note the orientation between the hook and the body.



3.) Smear superglue on the inside of the second body half and carefully put the two halves together, matching up the edges and burying the hook body. Press together the two halves until the glue sets. Usually takes just seconds.



4.) Turn the hook to a vertical position in the vise and add body segments by starting and stopping the thread (ie start a new body segment with a new set of thread wraps, cut the tag end, wrap 5-6 turns and

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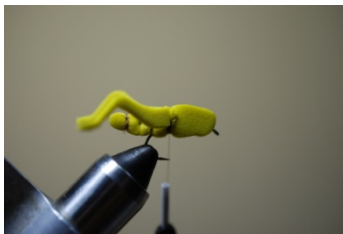
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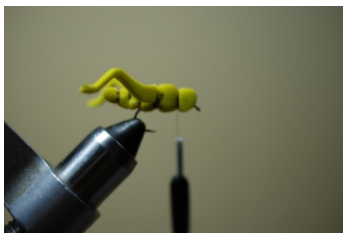
then whip finish and cut the thread - repeat in new locations). You can choose how many segments you want by varying the spacing.



5.) Reorient the hook back to the horizontal position and continue to add additional body segments as described above. When you have the number of body segments desired, add a pair of the foam back legs (one on each side) by wrapping the thread around the last segment while holding the legs in the desired orientation. You can flare the legs up so the body lands on the water, or add them in a more down position so the legs and the body both hit the water.



6.) Add a last segment to mark the sections between the hopper head and the thorax. Use the same method to create the segment with thread.



7.) An option on the wing is to just use the Wing Material, or, I like to add an under wing of elk hair (or deer hair). Stack the tips to make them even and attach using thread wraps to the segment between the head and thorax. Clip the ends of the hair close to the hopper body. A drop of head cement on the hair and thread wraps wouldn't be a bad idea at this point, just for insurance.

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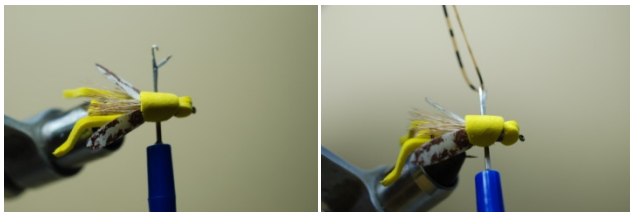
8.) Add the wing material wings on top of the hair under wings, splaying the two wings at a pleasing angle and attach using thread wraps. Note the picture is taken with the vise rotated to show you the wing splay.



9.) Attach the pronotum to the top of the hopper, over the wing and under wing by adding superglue to the body and placing the pronotum on the top of the hopper and gently bending the pronotum around to the sides. Hold in place while the glue sets up. I use a set of self closing tweezers to help with this and keep my fingers out of the glue.

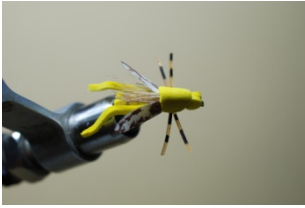


10.) Stick a bodkin thru the thorax (under the hook) to create a hole for the front legs. I then use a leg puller tool to insert thru the hole and pull a doubled over rubber leg thru the hole. Don't pull the legs quite half way yet.

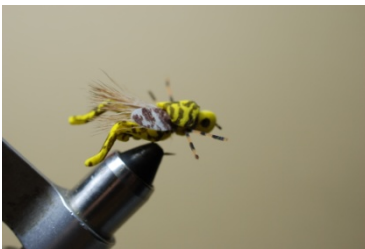


11). Place a small amount of superglue on the longer side of the rubber legs and then pull them thru to the half way point so the superglue is dragged down into the foam and it locks the legs in place. Remove the leg puller and clip the loop in the rubber legs to create two four legs (two on each side).

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12.)Add permanent colored markings to the hopper to give it variegation and make it more hopper like (there's probably a better artistic explanation, but I think you get my meanings. Look for pictures of actual hoppers on the web and try to draw similar markings onto the pattern.



You can insert the rubber legs without using a leg puller, but I find it to be the easiest way. You can buy commercial leg puller tools from various fly tying supply shops, but I found one at a local hobby shop (JoAnns or Michaels) that cost only a couple of bucks and was the perfect size. It wasn't designed to be a leg puller, as a matter of fact it was called a knit picker (for repairing loose threads in a sweater or other woven fabric).



Barry Webster

Tying Director