

Fly Fishing Flies

A Visual Identification Guide

52 popular patterns across eight categories — with the flies that go by more than one name flagged throughout.

1. Dry Flies

Float on the surface film and imitate adult insects — mayflies, caddis and stoneflies — sitting on top of the water.



Adams

Imitates: General gray mayfly (many species)

The most famous all-purpose dry fly. A gray, buggy impressionist that suggests dozens of mayfly species rather than one.

Closely related: Parachute Adams — same fly with a parachute hackle and upright post for visibility.



Parachute Adams

Imitates: General gray mayfly

The Adams tied parachute-style: hackle wound horizontally around an upright white post. Floats lower and is easy to see. Often called a “Para Adams.”



Blue Winged Olive

Imitates: Baetis mayfly (olive-bodied)

A small olive mayfly imitation, deadly in cool, overcast conditions.

Also known as: BWO; Baetis (the natural insect the fly imitates)



Pale Morning Dun

Imitates: Ephemera mayfly (pale yellow)

A pale yellow/cream mayfly dry; a Western hatch staple.

Also known as: PMD

Closely related: Sulphur — the very similar Eastern counterpart.



Elk Hair Caddis

Imitates: Adult caddisfly

A buoyant, palmered-hackle caddis adult with a flared elk-hair wing. One of the best searching dries.

Closely related: Deer Hair Caddis — same design tied with deer hair.



Royal Wulff

Imitates: Attractor (imitates nothing specific)

A high-flying, highly visible attractor with a red band and white calf-hair wings.

Closely related: Derived from the Royal Coachman; the Royal Trude shares the body with a down-wing style.



Royal Coachman

Imitates: Classic attractor

A 19th-century attractor with peacock herl and a red floss band — the ancestor of the whole “Royal” family.

Closely related: Royal Wulff, Royal Trude — same body, different wings.



Griffith's Gnat

Imitates: Cluster of midges

A tiny peacock-and-grizzly-hackle fly that imitates a clump of midges balled together on the surface.



Stimulator

Imitates: Stonefly / large caddis adult

A big, bushy attractor dry. Great on its own and as a buoyant indicator in a dry-dropper rig.



Light Cahill

Imitates: Cream mayfly (Eastern hatch)

A classic Catskill-style cream mayfly dun. Part of the traditional named-hatch family (with Quill Gordon, March Brown, etc.).



Comparadun

Imitates: Mayfly dun (flush-floating)

A no-hackle dun with a fanned deer-hair wing and split tails; sits flush in the film.

Also known as: Originally the Haystack (Fran Betters)

Closely related: Sparkle Dun — a Comparadun with a trailing shuck, fished as an emerger.

2. Nymphs

Fished subsurface to imitate the immature (nymph/larva) stage of aquatic insects. This is where a huge share of trout are actually caught.



Gold Ribbed Hare's Ear

Imitates: General mayfly/caddis nymph

One of the oldest and most versatile nymphs — a scruffy, buggy pattern that suggests many naturals.

Also known as: Hare's Ear Nymph; GRHE



Pheasant Tail Nymph

Imitates: Slim mayfly nymph

An elegant, slim mayfly nymph tied from pheasant tail fibers.

Also known as: PTN; Sawyer's Pheasant Tail (the original British version)

Closely related: Frenchie — a hot-spot variant, hugely popular in Euro-nymphing.



Frenchie

Imitates: Mayfly nymph with a hot spot

A Pheasant Tail variant with a bright collar ("hot spot"). A top-producing competition nymph, often tied perdigon-style.



Prince Nymph

Imitates: General nymph / attractor

A dark peacock-herl nymph with white biot wings and brown hackle; a proven attractor.

Also known as: Originally the Brown Fork-Tailed Nymph (renamed for tyer Doug Prince)



Copper John

Imitates: Weighted attractor nymph

A flashy wire-bodied nymph that sinks fast and doubles as an anchor fly in a two-fly rig.



Zug Bug

Imitates: Caddis / mayfly nymph

A peacock-herl nymph with a silver rib that broadly suggests many nymphs.



Pat's Rubber Legs

Imitates: Stonefly nymph

A big, wiggly chenille stonefly with rubber legs — a Western high-water killer. A classic example of one fly with many names.

Also known as: Girdle Bug; Rubber Legs; Rubber-Legged Stone; Pickle; Drifting Turd



Zebra Midge

Imitates: Midge larva / pupa

A tiny wire-ribbed, bead-head midge — a tailwater essential.



Perdigon

Imitates: Fast-sinking mayfly nymph

A slim, epoxy-coated tungsten nymph built to cut through current. “Perdigon” names a whole family of competition nymphs.



Rainbow Warrior

Imitates: Midge / small attractor

A flashy pink-and-silver attractor nymph; a modern confidence fly on tailwaters.



Tellico Nymph

Imitates: Stonefly / caddis nymph

A traditional yellow-bodied nymph with a peacock shellback; a Southern-Appalachian classic.



Stonefly Nymph

Imitates: Stonefly larva

Large dark nymphs imitating stonefly larvae. Named versions include Kaufmann’s Stone and the 20-Incher.

3. Streamers

Larger flies stripped through the water to imitate baitfish, leeches and crayfish. They provoke aggressive, predatory strikes.



Woolly Bugger

Imitates: Leech / baitfish / general

The single most versatile streamer — the one fly to have if you could have only one. A marabou tail over a palmered body.

Closely related: Woolly Worm (its ancestor); Egg-Sucking Leech (a variant with a hot egg head).



Woolly Worm

Imitates: Caterpillar / general nymph

The palmered-body ancestor of the Woolly Bugger, tied without the marabou tail.



Egg-Sucking Leech

Imitates: Leech eating an egg

A Woolly Bugger with a hot-colored egg head; a famous salmon and steelhead pattern.



Muddler Minnow

Imitates: Sculpin / baitfish / hopper

A spun deer-hair head over a baitfish body. Fishes as a sculpin, a minnow, or even a grasshopper.

Closely related: Marabou Muddler, Mini Muddler.



Clouser Minnow

Imitates: Baitfish (jigging action)

A dumbbell-eyed baitfish fly that jigs up and down. Effective for nearly every predatory species, fresh and salt.

Also known as: Clouser Deep Minnow (its full name)



Zonker

Imitates: Baitfish

A rabbit-strip streamer with a lifelike, breathing swimming action.



Sex Dungeon

Imitates: Large baitfish

An articulated (multi-hook) modern streamer by Kelly Galloup for big, predatory trout.



Mickey Finn

Imitates: Bright baitfish / attractor

A classic yellow-and-red bucktail streamer that has caught fish for a century.

4. Wet Flies & Soft Hackles

Older-style subsurface flies fished on a swing. The soft, webby hackle “breathes” in the current and imitates emerging or drowned insects.



Partridge and Orange

Imitates: Emerging caddis / mayfly

A classic North Country “spider” — orange silk body, soft partridge hackle.

Also known as: Orange Partridge

Closely related: Partridge and Yellow, Snipe and Purple (sister patterns).



Soft Hackle Pheasant Tail

Imitates: Emerging mayfly

A soft-hackle version of the Pheasant Tail, fished just under the surface as an emerger.



Leadwing Coachman

Imitates: Drowned insect / caddis

A traditional peacock-bodied wet fly; the wet-fly ancestor of the Royal Coachman dry.

5. Terrestrials

Imitate land-based insects — grasshoppers, ants, beetles and crickets — that fall onto the water. A summer staple.



Dave's Hopper

Imitates: Grasshopper

A realistic deer-hair grasshopper by Dave Whitlock.

Closely related: Built on Joe's Hopper, its earlier predecessor.



Chernobyl Ant

Imitates: Hopper / big ant / stonefly

A big foam attractor with rubber legs and a bright indicator. Imitates a lot, or nothing — and works anyway.

Closely related: Chubby Chernobyl — its foam-and-poly-wing evolution.



Chubby Chernobyl

Imitates: Hopper / stonefly

A foam attractor with a white poly wing; arguably the most popular modern foam fly and a superb dry-dropper anchor.



Foam Beetle

Imitates: Beetle

A simple foam beetle with a bright indicator dot for visibility. Deadly on summer trout.



Parachute Ant

Imitates: Ant

A two-humped ant body with a parachute hackle. The winged “flying ant” version imitates a mating flight.

6. Emergers & Midges

Imitate insects trapped in the surface film during the vulnerable change from nymph to adult — often the most productive stage of a hatch.



RS2

Imitates: Mayfly / midge emerger

A tiny, sparse emerger (“Rim’s Semblance 2,” by Rim Chung). A tailwater essential.



WD-40

Imitates: Mayfly / midge emerger

A simple, deadly small emerger — a few materials, endless fish.



Barr Emerger

Imitates: Mayfly emerger

John Barr’s emerger, tied to match BWO and PMD hatches.



Klinkhammer

Imitates: Emerging mayfly / caddis

A parachute emerger whose abdomen hangs below the film while the post rides on top.

Also known as: Klinkhåmer Special; Klinkhamer (spelling varies)

7. Egg & Worm Patterns

Not insects at all — they imitate fish eggs and aquatic worms. Especially effective for trout, steelhead and salmon.



San Juan Worm

Imitates: Aquatic worm

A simple chenille worm; a high-water and tailwater producer.

Closely related: Squirmy Wormy — the same idea in stretchy silicone.



Squirmy Wormy

Imitates: Aquatic worm

A San Juan Worm tied with wiggly silicone “squirmy” material for lifelike movement.



Egg Fly

Imitates: Single fish egg

Imitates a loose salmon or trout egg drifting in the current.

Also known as: Glo Bug; Nuke Egg; Y2K; Otter’s Egg (named variations)



Mop Fly

Imitates: Caddis / crane-fly larva

A modern (and controversial) fly using a microfiber “mop” strand. Effective and easy to tie.

8. Saltwater & Warmwater

Flies for bass, pike, panfish and inshore/offshore saltwater species.



Lefty's Deceiver

Imitates: Baitfish

Lefty Kreh's foundational streamer profile — casts easily and holds a baitfish shape in the water.



Half & Half

Imitates: Baitfish

Literally a hybrid of the Clouser Minnow and Lefty's Deceiver — Clouser eyes, Deceiver wing.



Crazy Charlie

Imitates: Shrimp / small baitfish

The original bonefish fly — a small bead-chain-eyed pattern that rides hook-up over sand flats.



Gotcha

Imitates: Shrimp

A pink-and-pearl bonefish staple; a go-to on Bahamian flats.



Game Changer

Imitates: Baitfish (ultra-realistic)

Blane Chocklett's articulated, segmented streamer that swims with lifelike motion. For pike, musky, bass and stripers.

Quick Reference: Flies With Multiple Names

The clearest cases where one fly — or one near-identical pattern — goes by several names.

Primary name	Also known as / related
Gold Ribbed Hare's Ear	Hare's Ear Nymph, GRHE
Pheasant Tail Nymph	PTN, Sawyer's Pheasant Tail (original)
Prince Nymph	Brown Fork-Tailed Nymph (original name)
Pat's Rubber Legs	Girdle Bug, Rubber Legs, Rubber-Legged Stone, Pickle, Drifting Turd
Blue Winged Olive	BWO, Baetis (the natural)
Pale Morning Dun	PMD (≈ Sulphur in the East)
Clouser Minnow	Clouser Deep Minnow
Comparadun	Haystack (original) → Sparkle Dun (emerger variant)
Egg Fly	Glo Bug, Nuke Egg, Y2K (variations on one concept)
San Juan Worm	≈ Squirmy Wormy (same idea, different material)
Klinkhammer	Klinkhåmer Special, Klinkhamer (spelling variants)
Woolly Bugger	← Woolly Worm (ancestor); → Egg-Sucking Leech (variant)
Royal Coachman	→ Royal Wulff → Royal Trude (shared "Royal" body)
Dave's Hopper	← Joe's Hopper (its predecessor)
Chernobyl Ant	→ Chubby Chernobyl (evolution)
Frenchie	= hot-spot Pheasant Tail variant (often perdigon-style)

Real drawings are shown where available; the remaining patterns use schematic diagrams. Swap in your own photographs in Word at any time.