

Desiccant, GINK or oil...?

What floats your boat fly's....?! There are many fishing companies producing a product that claims to float your fly. What are some? Where do you start? And how do you best use them?

Fly floatant comes in a number of forms; paste, gel, desiccant, liquid etc. All are designed to repel water and keep your fly materials from absorbing water, to keep them afloat like the hatch you're trying to match.

Liquid or paste type floatant's work best when applied to a dry fly straight out of your fly box, no punt intended! After a number of fish or fishing in rough waters these kinds of floatant's allow your fly to become water logged and stop doing their job. A downside to these types of products is that you can drown or over dress your fly causing the hair and feathers to stick together, in turn the fly becomes less buoyant. The fly can appear less 'natural' or leave an oil slick around the fly reducing the effectiveness of your imitation. If you happen to over dress your fly the only thing you can do is wipe off the excess using your shirt or hanky and let the fibres of the fly to dry.

A common name on the market for liquid, gel or non-silicone floatant's is GINK. My father tells me it's been around for as long as I have, 29 odd years. Gink has taken a generic name for any gel, liquid type floatant.

My experience with GINK and other non-silicon based floatant's is nothing short of what is to be expected. Off the shelf GINK is thick but with sun or body heat it quickly turns to a liquid. The trick for new players is to avoid over applying it to your fly. The bottle of GINK in my sling bag is years old and as an old saying goes 'a little, goes a long way.' I have tried Loon Aqual and Loon claims it has 'scent-masking pheromones'. I didn't have the bottle long enough to verify the claims before tripping up on the Thredbo and walking the Eucumbene River and not being able to find it ever again....

Desiccant or crystalline powder is designed to remove water. It is similar to the 'Hippo Desiccant Dehumidifier' used in wardrobes, or the little bags you find in your new shoes that suggest DO NOT EAT. The desiccant fly fisher's use is a very fine dust like substance.

Fly desiccant companies have developed small 'shaker' bottles where you drop your fly in the powder, close the lid and give it a shake. Others have developed a small nail polish style applicator and you brush on the powder to remove all moisture. Using either method, your fly will come out covered all snow white. You'll need to blow on it, flick the fly with your finger, or quickly make a few false casts to remove the excess before presenting it onto the water. If you are fishing a snow flake caddis this can work in your favour because your fly is covered white!

Desiccants do eventually fail you, as the fly becomes too water logged. You will have to change out your fly allowing the old one to dry naturally. I have found desiccants work better with big dries such as Royal Wulff's, Adams etc. Desiccants are not so good for emerger patterns where you need the abdomen to penetrate the meniscus.

Another option that may be suitable to add to your vest is CDC oil. CDC stands for 'Cul De Canard', which is French for "Duck Bottom". CDC oil is used on a fly made of CDC feathers. The feathers are actually from a duck and are located close to their preen gland which is located on the back of the duck. Naturally the feathers are very buoyant and float effortlessly without the need for artificial floatant's. I will only use the CDC oil on fly's tied with CDC. I apply the oil well before the fly is fished, generally once I have completed the tie and it's still in the vice.

Some brands of desiccant I have used to date are Loon top ride, Orvis Hy-flote and Frogs Fanny, which are all great products. My preference is Frogs Fanny as it has a brush applicator (the others don't), and in my experience it lasts longer. I have in the past opened the Loon and Orvis bottles on a day with a moderate breeze and lost half the contents into the air. I will admit desiccant is a little bit more expensive and on a good fish-catching weekend you can go through a bottle.

There are a number of other fly dressings that claim to shed water but must be applied to your fly long before the fly touches water. These are often called "permanent floatant's". I use a product called "Watershed" but I have only used it whilst tying up dry's on the vice. I believe it makes the fly's float a little longer before becoming water logged.

I am of the opinion both types of floatant's and the CDC oil has a place in your vest. I start by 'ginking' my flies before the session and as they become water logged I brush them up with desiccant. I immediately replace flies as they lose their skittish life-like movement or not ride high upon the meniscus like the real thing.

I hope my experiences shared above may assist you in the coming dry fly season.

[Wet a Nymph Fly Fishing,](#)

Jas

