# UNUSUAL FLY TYING TECHNIQUES

Two general comments: first, most of the techniques that follow have been around for a fair while. Some may not be well known in Australia, and certainly they do not fall within the techniques commonly employed by fly tyers. Secondly, what follows is discussion of materials as much as techniques, in particular those materials that are both versatile and relatively easy to use.

## Crochet flies


The mudeye pattern (right) is constructed from a leather underbody lashed to the shank and crochet chenille overbody.

This fly, despite realistic appearance, fails my test of a good fly: it is very intricate and difficult to tie, but not necessarily lifelike in the water.

This fly can be improved and made better by replacing the leather underbody with epoxy putty and the knotted pheasant tail legs with marabou legs to give it more movement in the water

## Epoxy

 Epoxy is versatile and easy to use.

The preferred brands of epoxy are: Z Poxy and Devcon 5 minute epoxy. Both can be obtained in Australia but are usually hideously expensive. You can also use 30 minute epoxy, or longer, which will be more resistant to yellowing.

Tried and true epoxy patterns are the Surf Candy (below) and the Ultra Shrimp (right).

MOE (Mother of Epoxy) heads can be formed with epoxy or hot glue. These heads can take a variety of forms (see chartreuse bitters pattern and epoxy fly below).

Hints on using epoxy:

- Mix slowly and thoroughly. Mixing quickly stirs in air and causes the epoxy to go opaque. In 5 minute epoxy the bubbles will not come out;
- You don't need a motorised fly turner, but it is desirable to help cure the epoxy;
- Mix on yellow Post It notes, convenient and disposable;
-  Epoxy is heavier than hot glue, be careful not to overdo it otherwise the fly could become unbalanced and ride upside down or on its side;
- On MOE heads:
    - It is necessary to use a monofilament frame (which disappears when the epoxy is applied)
    - You can use 2lb mono or buy mono on a spool like ordinary thread.

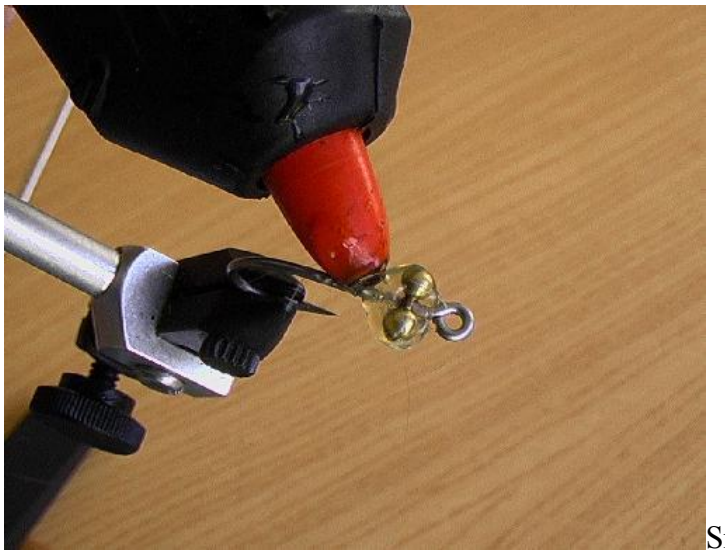
- Epoxy can be tinted in the mixing phase. I use glass paints because they do not seem to detrimentally affect the epoxy, and they maintain translucency. Others suggest dye mixed with rubbing alcohol, or inks.

- Alternative: paint the MOE when dry with glass paints. It is more time consuming but you can control the colour better.

- Surf candy and Ultrashrimp do not require colour because the epoxy picks up the underlying colour of the ultrahair material.

**Hot Glue**

Uses are:

-  Snails (freshwater)

- MOE blanks

Advantages

- Easy, quick and cheap

- Not messy

- No mono frames on MOE blanks

- Marks up well with pen or paint

- Lighter than epoxy

- Can buy colour glue sticks, but are hard to find.

Disadvantages

- You need to buy one or more glue guns (cheap one is $15)
- Colour glue sticks are hard to find and you are stuck with the colour
- Cheap glue guns are not sufficiently nimble on small flies
- Results can be lumpy
- On MOE blanks you have to even out bumps by holding over a flame (more fiddly than mono frames) and this will result in a rounder rather than flat shape
- Possible that hot glue MOE melts in the sun (there is conflicting evidence on this)

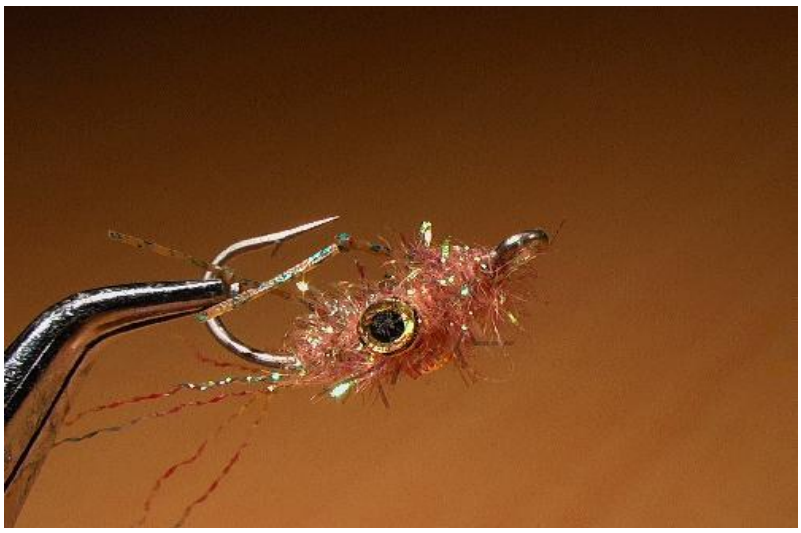
**Softex**

My MOE bitters blanks are covered in Softex. The advantages of Softex are that it produces a tough, non tacky vinyl finish. I like it a lot. It can also be used on Surf Candies as an alternative to epoxy.

Some tyers use it on all fly heads, preferring the matte finish to gloss. Some complain that as it dries the contraction causes distortion.

Other uses are for affixing eyes, eg reflective eyes into recessed brass eyes:

- Can epoxy over eyes in but it is messy, with yellowing over time
- Softex over the top results in tough vibration and chip resistant finish
- Colour is *slightly* opaque, but OK



Disadvantages are nasty fumes, flammable, and solvent (toluene) is difficult to find

Alternative products are Soft Body and E-Z Shape Sparkle (see http://www.saltwaterflies.com). Both are non-toxic. I have not tried either.

**Zelon (aka Z-lon) or Darlon**

The bitters patterns (chartreuse above and burnt orange below under "Spandex") contain an underwing of Darlon, in the same colour as the MOE blank..

Darlon and Zelon are synthetics consisting of very fine, high lustre, moderately krinkly strands. The strands tend not to mat together when wet.

Darlon is an alternative brand that I use only because Zelon is not stocked by my regular supplier. Zelon can be ordered through http://www.blueribbonflies.com.

Zelon and Darlon are gaining a reputation as the material of choice for some purposes. Some patterns using it are:

- Winging on Bonefish Bitters patterns (Brown, Bonefish Flies)
- Wings on spinners (See Flylife No. 34, page 9)
- Bodies on Serendipity Nymphs (Hughes, Essential Trout Flies, pp68-69)
- Trailing shucks on emerger patterns (Hughes, Essential Trout Flies, p 24)
- Legs on scud patterns (affixed with Softex – see Fly Tyer Summer 2002)

Closest available product in Australia is Hi Vis, but that is relatively coarse by comparison. Antron is similar but usually comes in a dubbing form. Be careful when applying head cement near this material because the fine strands wick the head cement resulting in a stiff wing.

**Popper Finishes**

***Painted Poppers***

Poppers are usually white, or red and white or yellow (nothing unusual about this).

I use acrylic paint from the hobby store. There are specific popper paints (eg Rainy's popper paints) that are a bit flexible to withstand all the rough treatment.

Pearlescent paints can be used, or glitter added for a bit of flash

***Tube Braid***

Using tube braid on a popper is not new, but it is not often seen either. It gives a sheeny, scaly effect reminiscent of baitfish. The trick (which no-one tells you) is to find tube braid just the right diameter and which has a bit of "give" to go over the head but also binds down on the popper body. Some are too tightly woven and fail to expand or bind. Others are too lightly woven or have wire or some other material in the product making it unsuitable. The popper to the right is tied with Flashabou braid.

***Hackle Siding***

 The heads of poppers can be given an alternative treatment by gluing a saddle hackle along each side giving an exaggerated lateral line/scaly effect.

This has been effectively used by Mike Croft (Veverka, Innovative Saltwater Flies, pages 49-51)

Note: the above are suggested for the benefit of the fly fisher. It is doubtful they make any difference to the fish. Many say the colour and finish to the popper is completely irrelevant. It is more important to have the right balance between head and tail and the right amount of "bloop" to attract fish.

 **Capt'n Crabby**

Crab bodies are problematic. You can use strips of yarn which is very effective (eg Del's Merkin, perhaps the most famous crab fly) but fiddly. Some use deer hair. Some use medallions of various types of product, eg felt, furry foam, Velcro disks, whatever, but attaching the body to the shank can be a problem and there is the difficult issue of how to affix legs.

The Capt'n Crabby (above) is made from corsair tubing. It is not available in Australia (as far as I am aware).

The corsair is light, is easily affixed to the shank, lets you form a real body without excessive weight, lets you affix legs of any shape or size, gives you flexibility to paint a variety of carapace colours and patterns on the top of the tube. It overcomes many of the problems of crab patterns.

Corsair tubing is also used for minnow bodies in narrow diameters (see Veverka, Innovative Saltwater Patterns).

**Spandex**

Rubber legs are common but they are fragile and can be difficult to mark up even with permanent markers.

There are a number of products made of spandex: dynafloss, flexifloss etc which have advantages over rubber legs:

- Easier to tie on a hook shank
- Tough
- UV resistant
- More lifelike than rubber
- Lighter than rubber

- Easy to mark up, takes dye