

Czech Nymphing

Straight from the source Originally published on Globalflyfisher.com, April 5th, 2006

By Pavel Adamovsky

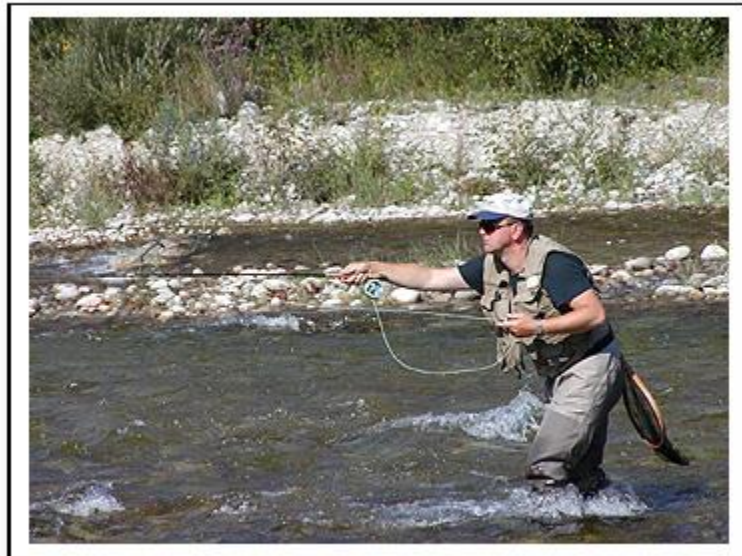
Development of mayflies, stoneflies, sedges, midges and other insects takes place on the bottom, under stones, among underwater plants and in sediments. Have a good look at the river bottom in some shallow place. Turn over a few stones; take out a sunken branch or wash a bit of pool mud through a sieve. You will see a real abundance of life here. Among other things you will discover various nymphs and larvae and also an animal of approximately 1 cm length - a scud - freshwater shrimp. Most of the animals you find under the water surface are an indispensable part of menu of the primary target of our interest and fishing passion - the fish we are catching with flies.

Already after a short look at life under the water mirror it is not difficult to understand why nymph-fishing is successful. When nymph-fishing on flowing waters we fish with flies in the water column, often near the bottom or on the bottom. Exactly in places where there is majority of fish food and where fish are readily taking it. When nymph-fishing, we will most often imitate scuds - fresh water shrimps - as well as nymphs of mayflies, caddis flies and midges.

For many fishermen nymph-fishing will never equal the classic dry fly fishing and its beauty. But thanks to its affectivity this method is indispensable for modern fly fishermen and it will bring a lot of unforgettable experience to everybody who will master nymph-fishing.

What's Czech nymphing?

The Czech nymph and Czech nymphing is a special fly and method of nymph fishing that developed in the regions of middle and Eastern Europe. The original Polish nymph was taken over by Czech fishermen during the eighties of the twentieth century. Especially the top Czech competitors have experimented with this new method, developed it and brought it nearly to perfection.



The principle of nymph-fishing with the Czech nymph is short-distance fishing, practically under the tip of the rod that we are keeping in the outstretched arm. The fly line is hanging under the tip

of the rod and its end often does not even touch the water level. Two or three nymph flies of various weights are used. Classic baits for the method of fishing the Czech nymph are the so called Bobeshs - this original Czech name we do not translate, because the name Czech nymph has quickly spread and now it is widely used. But also other types of flies are used (jig flies, flies with beads etc.)

Czech nymphs are weighted flies tied on gammarus hooks, imitating fresh water shrimps or caseless larvae of sedge flies. Imitative as well as fantastic patterns are used, mostly sizes 8 - 16. The Czech nymph is quite a simple fly regarding its construction. Its characteristic sign is a rounded (bent) gammarus hook that is weighted with lead wire. The body is created from natural or synthetic dubbing. Another typical feature of a the Czech nymph is the back, made from latex foil or a material with similar characteristics. For ribbing of the fly monofil or colored wire is used. A real Czech nymph is always tied as a very thin one, to sink very quickly towards the bottom.

History of CZN

Paradoxically, the history of the Czech nymph has its beginning in Poland, where during the international fly fishing competition in 1984 the Czech competitors got acquainted with the method of fishing at short distance, used by local competitors. Most of the Polish competitors were forced to fish short, because they had no fishing lines at their disposal so had to substitute them with



thick nylon monofilament. Flies used by Poles were imitations of Sedges *Hydropsyche* and *Rhyacophila*.

Czech competitors became acquainted with the method of short nymph very quickly and by the following year used it during the World Championships that took place on the Polish river San, and where Czech team placed second - just behind the Poles. In 1986 the method of short nymph has brought the first gold medal for the Czech team, when the Czech Slavoj Svoboda won the title of world champion in Belgium.

Originally, Czech nymphs were tied from materials that would bring smiles to the faces of today's fly tiers. Imagine a plastic foam body from a washing sponge, ribbing from horse hair and back from a mackintosh or bast. Use of gammarus hooks gave the Czech nymph its characteristic shape and the first thick patterns changed into thinner ones with the coming of new tying materials of higher quality.

Early in the evolution of Czech Nymphing, imitative patterns were preferred, like scuds and caddis larvae. The originally monotonous bodies of these flies were consecutively enriched by various color spots and the evolution went so far that today in fly boxes we can find nymphs of various color combinations not having anything in common with natural patterns.

Technique

The basic method of fishing with Czech nymph is the so called short nymph (rolled nymph). When using this method we are catching fish practically under the tip of the flyfishing rod and commonly without making use of the flyfishing line, the end of which does not touch the water surface in most situations. After casting upstream, we allow our flies to sink to the bottom



gradually and follow their movements downstream with the tip of the rod. We keep the rod in the hand with the arm stretched in front of us all the time. When the flies reach the area under our site, we lift the flies from the bottom with a movement of the rod upwards and cast again. The main prerequisite of success of the method of short nymph is keeping a permanent contact with the flies. A bite of a fish shows up as an inconspicuous movement of the leader/fly line upstream or to the sides, or just like a short stop of the whole system in the course of the travel of the flies through the water column. When we are not able to keep our contact with the flies, our chances to observe a take is markedly reduced.

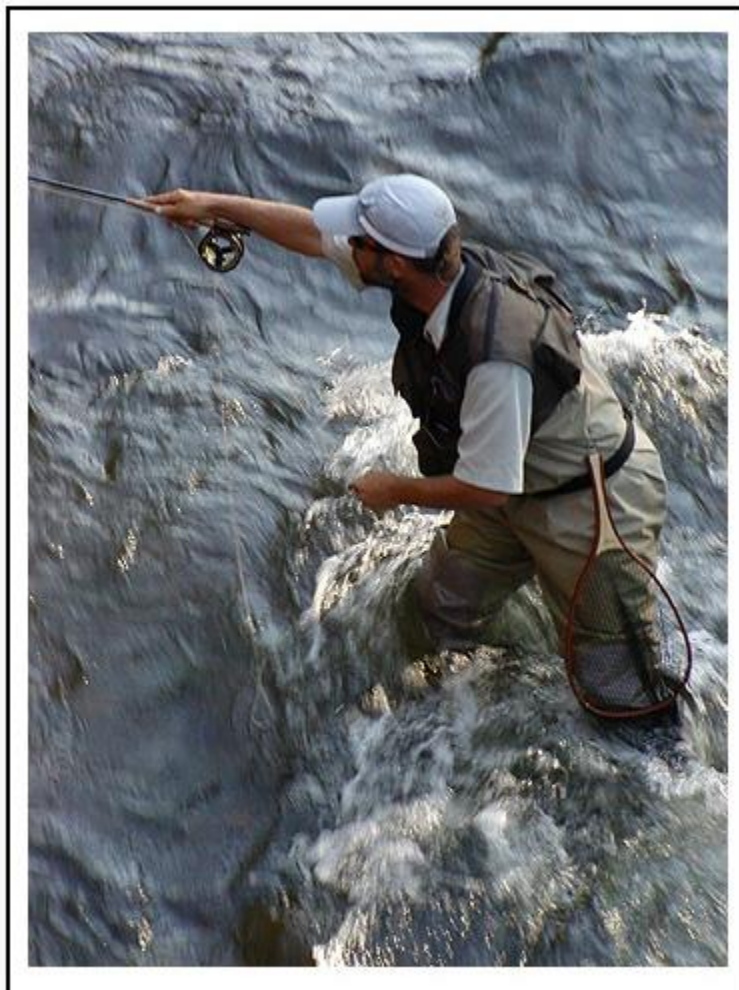
There are several things that can help us to maintain contact with the flies. First of all it is, however, proper leading the flies and "copying" their movements in the water by rod and line, while trying to keep the leader (cast) stretched all the time. Another important help is also the length of the leader. When using a short one, keeping good contact with the flies is easier than with a long one. Last but not least, it is very important to have a corresponding weight of the fly system. Keeping contact with heavier flies is much easier than with lighter ones (lighter flies, however, behave more naturally in the water).

Czech nymphs are not necessarily to be used only in the "short" way, but with similar success also in the "long" way, when we cast flies farther and lay the line on the water. Then we identify the takes by movements or stop of the line tip. In this way we can fish upstream, across the stream and downstream as well. When fishing, we combine both methods (short and long) according to given conditions.

Equipment

As a universal and generally recommended gear for fishing with Czech nymphs is a rod AFTMA 5, length 275 cm (9 feet). We use a normal double tapered line of the same class as the rod. Recently there is a trend for using lighter rods (AFTMA 4, 3 or even 2). It is important to use a rod as light as possible, because regarding the technique of fishing with Czech nymph (fishing with the arm stretched forward, frequent casting) we feel every superfluous gram.

The leader is made from three monofilament parts (there is no need for a tapered cast) of 0,12 - 0,18 diameter. The length of the leader should not exceed the length of the rod.



A useful part of the system for Czech nymphing is a strike indicator. As we identify many takes according to the movements of the line, it is always good to have a well visible end of the line. Especially the so called speed connector pieces in different colors are very popular. These are also a good device for connecting the fly line and the leader. The last important equipment of a Czech nymph fisherman are wading trousers. As we are looking for fish at a short distance, it is often necessary to wade even to such places, where a fisherman using another flyfishing method only casts to.

Other parts of the gear do not differ from those used with other techniques.

Tactic

Tactics of fishing with the Czech nymph will always differ according to current conditions and universal directions for right tactics do not exist. In any case it is important to take several checked up facts into account:

Where to fish:

With a Czech nymph we usually fish in shallow as well as in deep currents and in the boundary lines between them and eddies and calm pools. We look for places, where there are deep places (pits), in these there are often fish. We will be successful also in deep pits between two currents and near bunches of water plants like water buttercups.



When to fish:

When reading some foreign journals we can get an impression that the Czech nymph method can be effective only when it is used for catching grayling in winter. On the contrary, Czech nymph is successful all the year round. It is especially effective (when compared with other methods) during times of high water, as after a rain, when other methods are failing, because with them it is difficult to get a fly to places where fish are feeding. Practically in most cases, when we cannot see any fish activity on the water surface, it pays to use the Czech nymph method.

How to fish:

We fish at a short distance, often only so far, that the distance is just a bit greater than the length of our rod. We leave the flies drift freely, only during the end phase we often meet with success, when we let the flies rise from the bottom to the surface. Proper weighting of flies is important. The flies must be heavy enough to sink to the required depth, but on the other hand they must not be weighted too much, so as they do not often get snagged on the bottom and also when overweight, they can not be led through the water as naturally as possible. Weighting of the flies we must flexibly adjust to depth and speed of the current. During the actual fishing the flies must be as near to the bottom as possible in places, where we expect a bite. Regarding the short distance we are fishing at, we must be careful not to spook the fish. While fishing in clear or shallow water, the affectivity of our fishing can be remarkably increased, when we lower our silhouette.

What fish:

Grayling is the fish that responds to the Czech nymph best. But we can successfully fish for brown and rainbow trout, chub, dace, roach or barbel.

What flies:

There is no general rule determining the most effective pattern of Czech nymph. When we do not know, to what flies the fish will positively respond, we put three fly patterns on the leader, in distinctly various color combinations and test the affectivity of individual patterns. Usually a natural pattern is tied as the tip fly or first dropper and a "wilder" pattern as the second dropper. The deeper the water and the larger the fish we are expecting, the larger fly patterns we can use. For fishing for brown trout imitative patterns are more suitable, for rainbow trout and grayling beside natural patterns we use various color combinations, having nothing in common with imitations of natural food. For catching non-salmonids flies of "sober" colors are best.

Flies

The basic pattern for fishing with Czech nymph is a fly, in Czech called Bobeš (read bobesh = Czech nymph). It is a weighted fly tied on a Gammarus hook. The Czech nymph imitates freshwater scuds, caseless caddis larvae, or is tied in absolutely fantastic color combinations. A true Czech nymph must be thin, to sink as near to the bottom as possible during its short trip through the water. Sizes of the flies differ according to fishing conditions (water depth, clarity, current speed, size of fish etc.). The most used sizes for European waters are

#10 and #12. When nymph fishing on large rivers or expecting a strike of a large fish we often use flies up to the size #6. On small streams we can get down to nymph size #16.

Czech nymph is not the only type of a fly, we can successfully use for Czech nymphing. Also other types of artificial flies are effective, like jigs, nymphs with beads (gold, silver, brass), classical nymph types (pheasant tail, hare's ear etc.) or nymph tied on special hooks (e.g. nymphs tied on hooks with a drop).

We can combine types, patterns, sizes and colors of the flies to our heart's content and there is no guaranteed or best combination. When we know what flies the fish are taking, we can fish with three identical patterns. In a situation when we are not acquainted with the river or do not know



the fish appetite, there is nothing left but to experiment, and in such a cases it gives us an advantage when we tie on three different flies in different colors and sizes.

Fly-tying basics

Tying a Czech nymph is very simple and no special or exotic materials are needed for it. For tying a standard Czech nymph we need to have the following items in our tying box:

- tying thread
- Gammarus hook
- lead wire
- natural or synthetic dubbing material in various colors (rabbit, hare, opossum, antron etc.)
- vinyl foil
- nylon



With these materials we will be amply supplied for the beginning. If we wish to experiment more with tying Czech nymphs, then it will be good to add the following to the above mentioned materials:

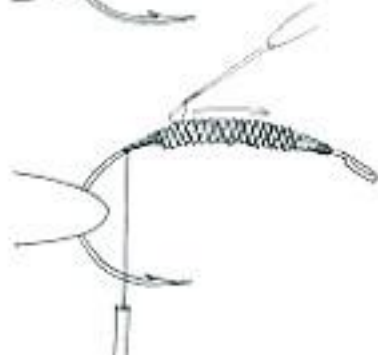
- gold tinsel
- synthetic mother-of-pearl dubbing
- metal beads
- various types of wire
- special foil for tying nymph backs
- alcohol felt tip pen

The basic tying procedure of tying a classical Czech nymph we will show in the following tying process (text and drawings by Bohumir Sumsky. Another version can be found [here](#)).

1



2

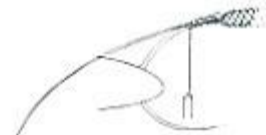


1. We lay a foundation of lead wire in tight turns on the shank of a hook, fixed in the vice.

Number of turns and diameter of the lead wire we choose according to the requisite weight of the fly. In flies, where we do not put much weight or none at all, we use copper wire, or we leave out this step entirely. We make the turns in the middle third, or two thirds of the shank. We leave some space at the hook eye for the head and at the end of the shank for tying in the material and tapering of the rear of the abdomen. (Ill. 3)

2. We fix the tying thread between the eye and lead and wind a few turns of the wire over it, so as they do not get loose and do not turn around the axis of the shank. It is advisable to put a drop of varnish over the lead on the turns. We leave the thread and bobbin hanging at the end of the shank (Ill. 4).

3



4



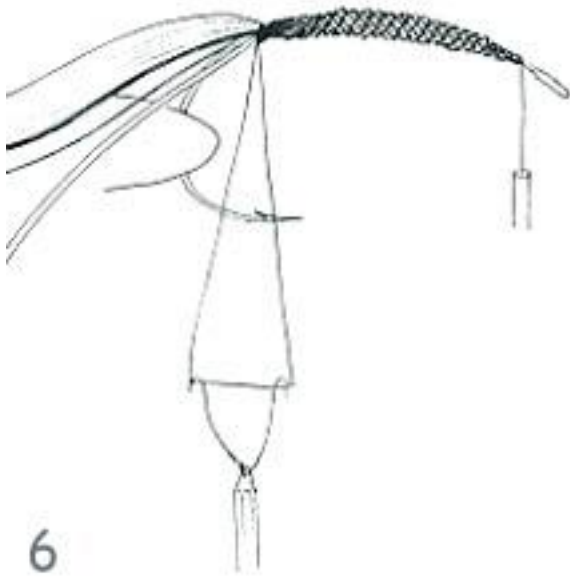
5



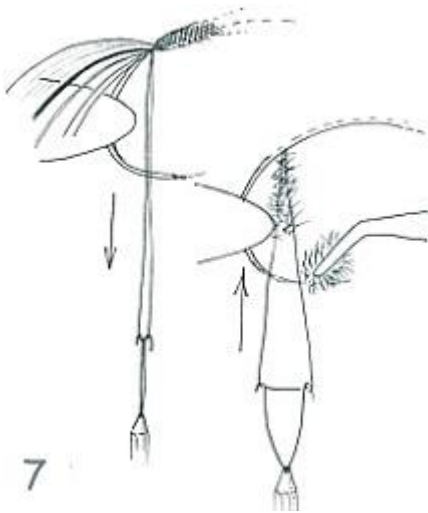
3. Here we tie in the material successively. We begin with that one, that we will use as the last and consecutively we tie further material in the reverse succession, than we will use it. We begin by tying in about 10 cm of nylon line of 0,10 - 0,15 mm diameter, that we will use for final ribbing and strengthening of the fly. We fix the end of nylon line behind the lead turns with the tying thread, the rest is directed to the rear and we proceed with several turns (3-5) to the end of the shank. It is good to flatten the end of the line a bit with help of a forceps. Then it holds better (Ill. 5)

4. Further on we tie in a 3-4 mm wide vinyl strip, the dim side up. There where it is tied in, we shape it into a point with help of scissors and this point we tie in to the back. We tie the whole length we have; we will shorten it to the proper length till before tying the head. Thus it is easier to work with and we spare the material (Ill. 6).

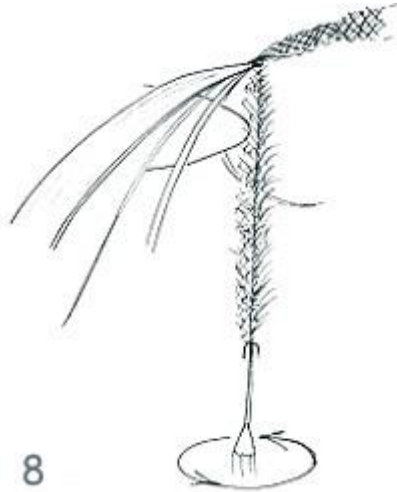
5. Now we tie in about 10 cm of golden glossy tinsel. These are sold under various business names in various color and iridescent shades. We are using them for various flies, especially in gold and silver (Ill. 7)



6. Now we come to dubbing. We make a 10 - 12 cm long dubbing loop from the tying thread and hang a twister in it. We fix the loop with a few turns and proceed with the thread to the hook eye, where we leave the bobbin hanging (Ill. 8)



7. By pulling the twister with the left hand we close and again open the loop a bit. We close the loop and smear it lightly with dubbing wax. With help of tweezers we choose small wisps of hair and insert them into the opened loop successively. We close and open the loop again. The wax should hold the hair, even when the loop is opened. First we must check what amount of hair to put in. It is better less than more.

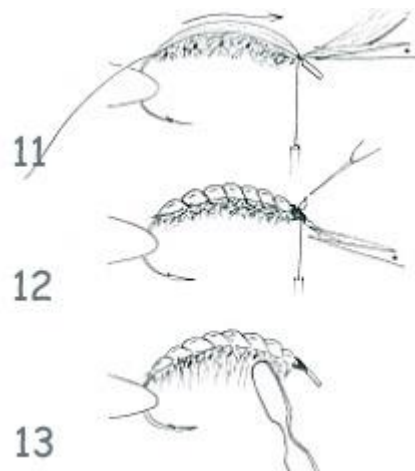


8. When we have inserted the required amount of hair along the whole length of the loop, we spin the loop with the hair, producing a wick by means of the twister (Ill. 9 a, b)



9. We wind the wick in tight dextral turns towards the hook eye. At the eye we leave enough space for finishing the fly. We fix the wick with two turns of the thread and clip off the rest (Ill. 10)

10. We rib the body of the fly by 5 - 6 dextral turns of the tinsel and fix the ribbing with the thread (Ill. 11)



11. We put the slightly stretched vinyl stripe along the back of the body and fix it at the eye with the thread (Ill. 12)

12. We rib the whole fly with 6 - 8 tight sinistral turns of the nylon line. We must take care not to move the vinyl stripe to one side. Therefore we fix it with our left hand and keep straightening it during the process. Then we fix the line with the thread and clip off the rest (Ill. 13) We form a tiny neat head from the thread and whip-finish in the least three times. We cut off the thread and varnish the head (Ill. 13)

13. With a brush from a dry zip fastener we comb out downward pointing legs from the body on both sides (Ill. 14)

Instead of a dubbed wick we can use a ready made wick twisted from copper wires, instead of nylon line we can use a thin copper or brass wire. We can dye the head and a small part of the hair adequately with some dark permanent felt-tip pen. In this way we also can darken the whole back of the body or its part. A darker back and lighter abdomen is sometimes very effective. A conspicuous color dot, e.g. a red dot in the centre of the body can be also very effective. We must keep in mind the whole shape of the fly that should be thickest in the center and gradually thinner towards the head and tail.

Ed: For more information on Czech Nymphs, I suggest readers visit web site [Czech Nymphs](#)