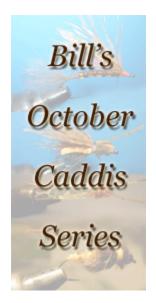
Bill's October Caddis Series

By Bill Carnazzo

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ⁱ [See editor's note at bottom of last page]



Over too many years of fishing October Caddis hatches on streams such as the Upper Sacramento, McCloud, Pit, Trinity, and North Yuba Rivers, I have come up with a series of five flies that are representative of the various life cycle stages of this marvelous insect. Look for an article on these five patterns in the October, 2009 issue of California Fly Fisher. The five patterns and the stages they represent are:

- Larva Bill's Stick Caddis¹
- Pupa Bill's October Caddis Pupa
- Emerger Bill's Emerging Thing¹
- Adult Bill's Big Fish Fly and October Bandit¹
- **Deceased** The party's over, now just fish food.

What follows are the full, illustrated recipes for these five life stages of the October Caddis.

I. Bill's Stick Caddis – The Larva Stage

Materials:

Hook: Tiemco 300; Daiichi 1260, Targus 200HBN, or equivalent # 6-10
Bead: Black (tungsten preferred, but expensive); options:

gold, copper, brown/orange

¹ The GBF <u>Pattern Archives Page</u> has more compact or concise, but less informative, recipes for these flies then the ones that follow.



Stick Caddis Duo

Dark brown 6/0 Thread: Weight: 12-20 wraps .020 lead Tail: Small bunch of brown marabou Abdomen: Dubbed mix of brown Paxton Buggy Nymph and Spirit River Lite-brite, copper or bronze color, plus a little Ice Dub UV Pearl "Sticks:" pheasant tail fibers Legs: Black hen, tied in nymph style Collar: "dirty" yellow rabbit or antron dubbing, fronted with black collar.

glass

Head: Thread

Larva Stage Description

The Stick Caddis pattern has been very successful over the years. It was "born" many years ago in its original form on what began as a very frustrating, cold, drizzly fall day on the North Yuba River, one of my favorite streams. Unable to entice but a few dinks to my nymphs, I began turning over rocks to look for bugs, I noticed some large grayish-brown caddis larvae cases attached to the underside of the rocks. Removing and opening a few of the cases, I found a creamy orange pupa apparently undergoing its transformation to an adult. Having nothing specific in my fly boxes to imitate the cased beast, I gave a brown/olive Wooly Bugger a haircut and slid it through some likely-looking pockets. The fishing having improved somewhat, and being an optimist, I decided to do some tinkering at the vise that evening. The result was a rather crude representation of the insect. After catching a few fish on it in the ensuing weeks, I surmised that I might be onto something. From there the creative process took over. The current versions of the fly (there are several) reflect a long metamorphic history of tweaks and improvements.

This pattern is suggestive of what I came to learn was the October Caddis larva that builds its case of sticks and rocks. In the <u>entomology</u> article on this site you will find a brief discussion of this rather marvelous insect, its habits, and its characteristics. There are other patterns that do a respectable job of imitating this bug, but the Stick Caddis has, in my experience and in that of a whole lot of my friends and acquaintances, produced far more fish. And the nice thing about the fly is that, while fish key more on October Caddis larvae in the fall, the Stick Caddis can be fished year-round because the insects are available to the fish all year. In the August 2006 issue of California Fly Fisher, Andy Burk features Bill's Stick Caddis in his regular "At the Vise" column. Spirit River, Inc. will be carrying this and some of my other patterns in their 2007 catalog. If your local fly shop doesn't carry them, just ask them to obtain some from Spirit River.

The Stick Caddis is relatively simple to tie, but does require at least intermediate skills. The materials listed are for the dark brown version, but I also tie it in a grey version as well as a deep olive color. The grey version is tied in the same manner as the brown, except that the "sticks" are mostly trimmed back to the body to make the stubs look like small brown rocks. The larvae will build their case from whatever materials are found in around the stream. If conifers line the banks, for example, the cases will be made up of bits of bark and conifer needles. If streamside vegetation is sparse, there may be a few sticks but the case will be mostly rocks; if it is nonexistent, the case will be tiny rocks of various colors and sizes. In September of 2004, I was fishing the Truckee with a group of friends. Because the Truckee is an example of a stream (in many places) where there is no streamside vegetation except perhaps grasses, I chose to use the grey version. I was astounded by the results right from the first cast, which produced a Brown Trout 25 inches in length. In all, the fly produced 10 more fish over 20 inches that day—which is an unbelievable day on a puzzling river that has skunked me more times than I care to admit. The olive version is tied in the same manner as the brown, with the only difference being the dubbing color.

One of my favorite versions is the one I call the "Fall Phase." Although I use the Stick Caddis in one form or another all year long (even for Winter steelies on certain rivers), the Fall Phase is reserved for the magic months of late September, October, and November when the October Caddis hatch is in full swing. Those who have fished the fly can attest to the fact that it is deadly when fished properly—meaning fished (as Andy Burk would say) as a "rock roller" right on the bottom. I often combine this fly with a pupa or an emerger on the rigging—but more on that later. The Fall Phase fly is tied with a pale-orange collar and a silverlined orange or root beer colored glass bead.

Larva Tying Instructions

- 1. Smash the barb, and slip a bead onto the hook. Apply lead to the hook, and cover lead and shank with thread.
- 2. Tie in a tail just above the back of the barb. The tail should be sparse.

- 3. Create a dubbing loop and insert the loop tool into the loop to keep it open. Fill the loop with dubbing sufficient to dub the entire hook. Spin the tool while holding the thread just where the dubbing material ends. Let go of the thread while holding the tool, and the material will spin into a "rope." You can control the tightness of the loop by running your index finger up or down in the open part of the loop.
- 4. Using hackle pliers, grab the thread just below where the dubbing material ends, and wrap the dubbing around the rear 1/3 of the hook, smoothing it back with each wrap. Tie it off at the rear 1/3 point and lay the hackle pliers with the remaining dubbing loop over the back of the vise and out of the way.
- 5. Separate four pheasant tail fibers along the stem of the feather, and cut them off at the base. Bend two of them around the thread, and bring the thread up to the hook on the far side. Tie the fibers in there. One end of the fibers will be pointing forward; force these backward by tying over their base. Try to distribute the fibers evenly on the far side of the hook. Repeat the process for the close side of the hook.
- 6. Grab pliers and dubbing loop, bring them in front of the first set of "sticks" and dub the middle 1/3 of the hook. Again lay the pliers and loop over the back of the vise and out of the way.
- 7. Repeat step 5 to create more sticks in front of the middle 1/3 of the hook.
- 8. Bring the pliers and loop forward, and dub a bit more brown material in front of the forward set of sticks. Then dub a collar of around 1/8" of the yellow dubbing, to imitate the color of the interior body of the larva. I believe that this is a strike trigger; it imitates the insect's habit of reaching out to grab a rock when it gets into the drift, either accidentally or as a behavioral action. Dub a small collar of black rabbit dubbing in front of the yellow to imitate the head of the insect. Leave the rabbit fur's guard hairs intact.
- 9. This is an optional step. Apply legs by cutting out the tip of the hackle, and pulling the fuzz from the stem at the base, leaving enough fibers for legs. Tie them in with the point of the "v" facing forward, using the stem for the tie down point, which is just behind the bead. Trim off the stem and then dub a small amount of black dubbing around the area behind the bead. Apply glue to the thread and whip finish. You can also make legs from black antron yarn or similar material; actually, the guard hairs from the dubbed rabbit will serve as legs—which is why they should be left intact.

This fly must be fished on the bottom. The natural is heavy and rolls or bounces along the bottom when it is set adrift. You must watch the end of your line carefully and with concentration to see the strikes. Most anglers use an indicator of choice. Whatever system you choose, in order to see strikes you must have a direct connection between whatever you are watching and your fly or flies. This is especially true of flies that bounce along the bottom. You can't wait for the feel of the strike as you would in swinging a fly; rather, it is all visual, and you can only see the strikes if you concentrate on maintaining a tight connection. I authored an article in *California Flyfisher Magazine* on the October Caddis and on the short line nymphing technique, and the text of that article, titled <u>"Fly Fishing's Fall Bounty: The October Caddis"</u> is on

the GBF articles page at the link.

Tying tips for the Stick Caddis:

- 1. Don't blunt-cut marabou after it's been tied in as a tail. Instead, use your fingernails to "pop" it off at the proper length. This creates a more lifelike, uneven appearance that looks much better in the water.
- 2. When forming a dubbing loop, always close the top of the loop by dropping the bobbin over the loop and then wrapping forward on the shank. This makes it much easier to keep the material inside the loop as you work with it.
- 3. Have a few different colored versions in your box. For example, tie the fly in a grayish-brown color, mixing the dubbing with some gold Lite-Brite. In this case, however, you will want to clip most of the "sticks" close to the body so that they resemble brown/black pebbles instead of sticks. The reason for this color is that some October Caddis larvae live in areas where there is little or no streamside vegetation. In that situation they build their cases out of tiny pebbles most of which are a grayish-brown color. I'll usually leave one or two sticks for interest—or, just because I can.

II. Bill's October Caddis Pupa



Bill's October Caddis Pupa

Materials:

Hook:	Scud hook such as Tiemco 2457 or Daiichi 1120, Targus 200HBN, or curved shank hook such as Daiichi 1260 #8
Bead:	Orange or root beer glass bead with silver lining
Thread:	Orange 8/0
Abdomen:	Creamy orange Buggy Nymph mixed with gold Lite-brite, plus a little Ice Dub UV Pearl

Ribbing:	Small mylar tinsel or fine, limp pearl Flashabou
Back Stripe:	Brown turkey tail strip topped with mylar tinsel or flashabou
Wing Case:	Dark brown partridge or grouse
Antennae:	Two pheasant tail barbules
Thorax:	Narrow band of creamy orange Buggy Nymph
Wing Pads:	Tan sparkle antron yarn
Legs:	Pheasant back feather
Head:	Collar of black ostrich herl, black Buggy Nymph, or rabbit

Pupa Stage Description

This pattern is drawn from a Mike Mercer pattern. I have tweaked it to suit my own needs, but the credit clearly goes to Mike on this one. The name change is simply for convenience of reference, and not an attempt to arrogate Mike's pattern to myself—an all-too-common problem, it seems.

When the October Caddis pupation process is complete, the pupa chews its way out of its case. At this time its body is a creamy-orange color and it's head is black or dark brown. There is a short time between emergence from the case and the commencement of the insect's frantic swim to the surface. During this pause, the pupa is vulnerable to predation by hungry trout. Being opportunists, we fly fishers seek to capitalize on this vulnerability. Hence, there is a need for a pattern representing the hapless pupa—and this pattern has proven itself to fit this niche.

I normally add the pupa as a third "stinger" fly to my two-fly rig by adding about 12 inches of tippet material to the bend of the point fly, which is usually a Stick Caddis (more on rigging later). I use a heavy hook but only a tiny bit of extra weight because the Stick Caddis, along with the appropriate amount of shot on the leader, will suffice to keep the fly down. Otherwise, there would be so much weight that the rig would hang up on nearly every cast.

Pupa Tying Instructions

- 1. <u>Smash the barb if you're not using a barbless hook</u>. Apply the bead and weight, and cover the shank with thread all the way down to the middle of the bend. If you are using a Daiichi 1260 hook, end your thread wraps just above the back of the barb.
- 2. Tie in two pieces of mylar or flashabou, and a 1/8'' wide slip of turkey tail.
- 3. Fill a dubbing loop with the orange dubbing and dub a robust body, ending up at the 1/3 point on the hook.
- 4. Bring the turkey over the back making a narrow brown strip, and tie it down at the 1/3 point on the hook. Bring one piece of the mylar or flashabou over the top of the strip and tie it down. Rib the abdomen with the flashabou and trim the excess.
- 5. In front of the abdomen tie in and wrap several small dark partridge or grouse feathers. There should now be about 3/16" of room left behind the bead. This is the "Wing case." The barbules of this collar should not be more than 1/4" long.
- Cut a piece of sparkle yarn about 1" long. Lay it along the far side of the hook, measured to the length of the wing case. Tie it in there. Repeat on the close side of the hook.
- 7. Dub a small collar of the orange dubbing just ahead of where the collar was tied down. Use only about 1/16" of the remaining room for this.
- 8. Tie in two fibers of pheasant tail for the antennae; they should be about 2 shank lengths, and should lie along the back pointing to the rear.
- 9. Rotate the fly and tie in a beard hackle made of pheasant back feather. Cut out the heart of the feather and use that for the beard.
- 10.Cut 3 fibers of Ostrich herl from the stem and wrap a head about 1/8" wide. Alternative: use black Buggy Nymph or rabbit for the head. Whip finish and add a drop of super glue behind the bead on the bottom.



III. Bill's Emerging Thing - The Emerger Stage

Bill's Emerging ThingAbdomen:Alternating orange and root
beer glass seed beadsThorax:Creamy orange Buggy
Nymph mixed with gold Lite
BriteUnderwing:Orange crystal flash
(sparse)Wing:Burnt orange deer hairHackle:Soft furnace hackleAntennae:Pheasant tail fibers

Bill's Emerging Thing Description

I owe this pattern to a couple of very innovative good friends. A very long time ago Joe Kimsey, guru of the Upper Sacramento River and former owner of the Ted Fay Fly Shop in Dunsmuir, created his famous "Maggie" to imitate an emerging October Caddis. I believe Joe may have gotten the idea from Ted Fay. The Maggie is made of orangish dubbing and trimmed deer hair. Don't be put off by its shaggy appearance because that is intentional. Air bubbles are trapped between the trimmed deer hair strands, creating the suggestion of life—so very important in any fly, but especially in an emerger imitation. Many, many trout have been caught on the Maggie—which, of course, is the proverbial proof of the pudding.

But over time patterns morph, partly in response to changing fish reaction to patterns that they have seen a lot, and partly because we fly tiers are constantly tinkering in the exercise of our personal creativity. Ron Rabun's Crystal Maggie is a good example of a creative tyer adapting to changing conditions with a "revision" of a long-standing fly pattern. Ron's pattern incorporates most of the qualities of the Maggie, but includes some of his own designs. A few of Ron's changes include the addition of crystal flash with the wing, some ribbing, and a furnace-type hackle at the front. Again, the results prove the theory; the Crystal Maggie has brought many a fish to the nets of anglers, including me.

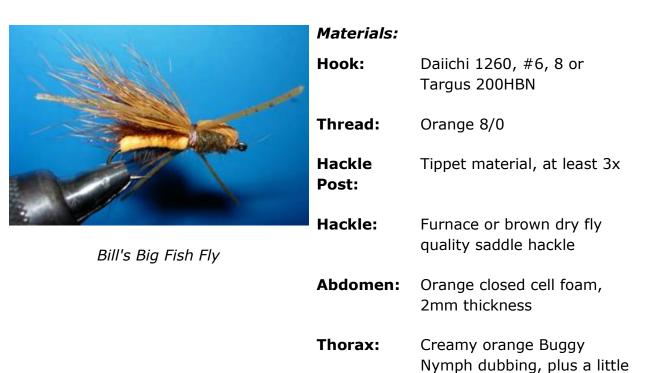
My own version, which I call "Bill's Emerging Thing," is based on both the Maggie and the Crystal Maggie. I changed the color of the deer hair "wing," used tiny glass beads for the body, and added a shuck made of CDC. I've been testing this fly for several years and am now convinced that it is a fish-catcher, having caught a good number of large fish with it during the fall season of 2008.

Step(s)	Illustration (click to enlarge)	Description
1 - 2		 Smash hook barb thoroughly—this is necessary (aside from normal barbless reasons) in order to slide the glass seed beads onto the hook. Place the hook in the vise with the bend facing down and slide an orange bead over the point and around the bend. Follow this with a root beer bead. Continue with alternating colors until the shank is half covered with beads. Reposition the hook in the vise in the normal position.
3 - 4	Jame Comme	3. Mount the thread at the eye and wrap it back to the 1/3 point on the shank. Push the beads forward to the 1/3 point and begin wrapping the thread rearward between the beads. Keep the forward pressure on the beads in order to keep them from sliding too far to the rear. Build a thread dam behind the last of the beads to keep them in place. You should, at this point, have sufficient room to tie in the CDC tail.
		4. Match two CDC feathers and pinch them between your thumb and forefinger. Measure them to 2/3 of the length of the shank and tie the tips in as a tail—in reality a shuck representation. Return the thread to the 1/3 point on the shank.
5 - 6		5. Dub a small thorax of orange dubbing material just ahead of the front bead, leaving room for the wing, hackle, and a small head.6. Tie in several strands of orange crystal flash as an under wing. Top this with a small bunch of

Bill's Emerging Thing Tying Instructions

		burnt orange deer hair. Don't stack the hair. Using a black Sharpie, make a strip along the top of the deer hair wing. Apply a tiny drop of super glue to the tie-in point.
7		7. On each side of the hook tie in a pheasant tail fiber using the same tie-in point as the wing. These will represent the insect's antennae.
8	-	8. Tie in a furnace hackle at the same point. Take 3 or 4 wraps and tie it off. Form a nice small head and whip finish.

IV. The Adult Stage - Bill's Big Fish Fly



Ice Dub UV Pearl

Underwing: Orange crystal flash

Wing: Burnt orange deer hair

Legs: Pumpkin colored Sili-Legs

Big Fish Fly (adult stage) Description

This fly is based on a pattern created by Al Beatty. He calls it the Hackle-Top Hopper. When I read his article in Trout magazine, I immediately tied a few and tested them out. My findings were that, tied correctly, the fly floats high, has great appeal to fish, and is very easy to see on the water. It worked well fished by itself, but I really liked it fished as the surface fly in a "hopper-dropper" setup. It can support a couple of flies and 1 or two split shot. I have never liked Stimulators for October Caddis adults (heaven knows I have used them for many years) because of the very unrealistic way that they sit up on the water surface instead of floating flush on the surface film as do October Caddis adults. The name I have given the much-modified fly is "Bill's Big Fish Fly." The reason is contained in the name itself. The fly is not overly difficult to tie, but it does require some intermediate tying skills.

Step(s)	Illustration (click to enlarge)	Description
1 - 2		 Debarb the hook, place it in your vise, and cover the shank with thread. Just above the back of the barb tie in a 12" piece of 2x or 3x monofilament. This will become the hackle post; we will wind the hackle around the monofilament. If you have a gallows tool with your vise, use it to hold the monofilament tightly in a vertical position. If you don't have a gallows tool, attach the mono to your light or figure out some other makeshift way.

Big Fish Fly Tying Instructions

3 - 4	3. At the same point, tie in a long furnace or brown saddle hackle. Wind it counterclockwise and upward around the mono in widely spaced turns; when you reach the 1" point begin winding downward in very close turns. If done correctly, this method will allow you to achieve 30-40 turns. This helps to provide flotation.
	4. When you have reached the shank with the saddle hackle turns, tie off the hackle in front of the post. It helps to let your hackle pliers hang over the shank and release the tension on the mono. You can pull the mono/hackle backward and out of the way while you are tying the hackle down.
5	 5. Cut a 1/8" strip of orange 2mm foam, making a point at one end. Tie the pointed end in just ahead of the hackle post and move your thread forward to the 1/3 point on the shank.
6	 6. Wrap the foam strip forward in close, interlocked turns. Don't stretch the foam as it destroys its floatation qualities. Tie the foam off at the 1/3 point. This leaves the front 1/3 of the hook for the rest of the steps.
7	7. Apply some Flexament to the top of the body, and then bring the hackle post over the body. Pull it tightly forward, making sure it is directly on top of the body. Tie it off at the 1/3 point.
8	8. At the same point, tie in a small bunch of orange crystal flash. Trim it so that it extends just slightly beyond the hook bend.
9	9. Cut a small bunch of burnt orange deer hair, measure it to shank length, and tie it in at the

	same point, tips facing to the rear. Don't stack the hair.
10	10. Cut another, slightly larger bunch of the deer hair. Measure it so it equals approximately 1.5 times the length of the shank. Trim the butts even, and tie this bunch in directly behind the hook eye with the tips pointing out over the eye. Keep the hair directly on top of the hook. Wrap rearward, covering up all of the butts. Place a drop of superglue on the tied-down butts.
11	11. Dub a thorax of creamy orange Buggy Nymph, leaving the thread at the 1/3 point. To achieve this you'll need to dub rearward from the hook eye to the 1/3 point.
12 - 13	12. Gather up the second bunch of deer hair and pull it directly upward; make sure you have all of the hair, and smooth it out as much as possible. Bring it over the thorax, forming a nice bullet head. Make sure that there is no space left between the front of the bullet heat and the hook eye.
	13. Tie the hair down at the 1/3 point. As you do this, push the hair down at the tie-down point, in order to make the hair splay outward. Place a tiny drop of superglue at the tie-down point.
14	14. Double a strand of pumpkin Sili-Leg material. Place it on top of the fly with the middle of its length at the wing tie-down point. Wrap 3 loose turns of thread over the leg material, and then cut the doubled loop. Pull one of the two sections down onto the far side of the hook, and the other onto the close side of the hook. Wrap the legs down tightly.



15. Whip finish between the legs and trim the thread. Apply glossy head cement to the top of the bullet head.

Big Fish Fly Hints

- 1. When making the wing sections on this fly, don't stack the hair—it gives the wing a more natural profile.
- 2. Make a black stripe on the top of the wing, along the shank axis, using a black Sharpie.
- 3. Before fishing the Big Fish Fly, apply silicone paste to the entire fly. Use only a small amount. When the fly begins to lose its floatation, immerse it in floatant powder and rub the powder in with your fingers. It will float like a cork after this treatment.
- 4. I tie this same fly with an amber body to imitate a Golden Stonefly; all black to imitate a cricket; in yellow and olive to imitate a hopper; and with a yellow-olive body and black wing to imitate a Skwala Stonefly.

Materials: Hook: Daiichi 1260, # 6, 8 or Targus 200HBN Thread: Orange 8/0 Bead Orange or root beer silverlined glass bead Abdomen: Orange 2mm foam Bill's Orange Wraith Thorax: Brown Buggy Nymph, plus a little Ice Dub UV Pearl Underwing: Orange crystal flash Wing: Pearl mylar sheet 14 of 16

V. The Deceased Stage - Bill's Orange Wraith

15

Legs: Pumpkin Sili-Legs

Weight: .020 lead wire

Bill's Orange Wrath Description

This pattern is based on my own "Drowned Stonefly" which is available on the GBF <u>Fly Patterns Page</u>. In its October Caddis outfit I call it my "Orange Wraith." Some years ago I discovered an odd phenomenon while fishing on a very cold late fall morning. I noticed that October Caddis adults that had perched the previous night on tree limbs hanging over the water had frozen overnight. As the day warmed a bit, the frozen insects dropped from the limbs to the water, encased in a sheath of ice. I wasn't sure, but I thought I saw trout slashing at these dead bugs as they hit the water. The next morning I was armed with some modified Drowned Stoneflies. After tying one on my tippet, I tried an upstream presentation beneath the overhanging branches. When that didn't work, I stepped a bit farther into the current and swung my offering across and down, so it slid beneath the tree branches. I watched in amazement as a large Rainbow charged out from its lair beside the bank and nailed the fly. The dead bug having achieved a new and ghostly life, I named my imitation the Orange Wraith.

The Orange Wraith has proved itself over the last few years. But keep in mind that its effectiveness occurs in a very narrow range and time frame: It works on very cold fall or winter mornings for an hour or two when the frozen insects fall dead into the stream and sink to the bottom, there to roll along into oblivion.

Bill's Orange Wrath Tying Instructions

- 1. Debarb the hook and slide the bead onto the hook. Wind on 10 wraps of .020 lead and push it forward against the bead. Coat the lead and shank with a layer of Flexament. Tie on the thread, cover the lead, and build up a "dam" behind the lead. Continue wrapping back to the bend.
- 2. Cut a 1/8" strip of orange foam, forming a point on one end. Tie it in by the point at the bend and wrap it forward to the 1/3 point on the shank. This time stretch the foam as you wrap because we are purposely eliminating its floatation qualities.
- 3. At the 1/3 point tie in a small bunch of orange crystal flash. Its length should be just beyond the hook bend.
- 4. To form the wings you will need a wing burning tool in a mayfly wing shape. I have an old set of Renzetti wing burners that I have used for many years. Cut a long strip from a sheet of pearl mylar material, ½" in width. Double it over, place it in the wing burner with the "loop" end down, and trim around the edges. As you are trimming, leave some material protruding from the grasp of the wing burner in order to allow the heat to form a bead around the edge of the wing. Briefly apply heat using a lighter and then release the end product

from the wing burner.

- 5. Trim the bottom end of the wing to a narrow width; this will allow it to be tied in easily.
- 6. Tie one wing in on the far side of the hook at the 1/3 point. Tie the other wing in on the close side of the hook, slightly overlapping the first wing. Their length should be such that they protrude slightly from the hook bend. Apply a small drop of super glue to the tie-in point for the wings.
- 7. Tie in legs, using the same procedure as for the Big Fish Fly (see step 14 above).
- 8. Dub the thorax in between and around the legs.
- 9. Whip finish between the legs

ⁱ Editor's note: The foregoing article is presented as Bill wrote it in 2009 with no material changes to content. However, it has been edited for formatting and style consistency with other articles in the Bill Carnazzo Archives series. Also, broken web links were replaced with links to equivalent material on the GBF website.