Vickie's UV-Midge Pattern…The one fly that you can use year-round

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I am excited to share a sneak peak of a new midge pattern I have been testing over the past few years. Let's hope that the team of fly tyers will soon be busy getting this one completed so that you may add this to your arsenal of stillwater fly patterns.

In this article, I will include examples of a variety of presentation methods to illustrate the versatility of this fly. This fly pattern mirrors the stage of the chironomid that is most important to trout and subsequently also to anglers. Can you guess what it is?

My new UV Midge pattern has become a staple in my fly box as it has outperformed other midge patterns that I have tested. I fished this pattern under a variety of conditions throughout Wyoming, Nevada, California, Washington and Oregon over a two-year period. I have also found this pattern productive when trout are selectively feeding on the pupa stage of insects as the pupae make their way towards the surface.

Chironomids, like most aquatic insects, are the most vulnerable when they emerge from the larva stage and transition into the pupa stage. Trout prey heavily on the pupa stage of the chironomid as it moves up towards the surface and hangs in the surface film attempting to break through the surface to emerge as an adult.

My UV Midge pattern suggests the most prolific source of food eaten year around for trout in stillwater habitats: chironomids. Known as midges (nonbiting flies), they are essential to trout as they are prolific in stillwater habitats. For example, Hal Jensen's book, Stillwater Fly-Fishing Secrets, cites a study showing how a single square yard of aquatic vegetation can yield 100,000 chironomids.

Features of my UV Midge: The fly's elongated, slim profile and segmented body, mirrors the natural shape of the midge pupa in stillwater habitats. I have found that incorporating UV materials in the fly pattern outproduced the same pattern without UV. UV Enhancer wrapped around the hook shank mimics the surface sparkle created by the gas bubble inside the pupal shuck. The addition of UV flash material placed at the eye of the hook also increases the fly's visibility in stained water conditions.

Size and color options: I primarily use size a #10 hook during spring conditions when the water is cooler. As the water warms and more insects become available, I switch to a smaller #12 or #14 size hook. I have found the most consistent color has been the black with silver ribbing. However, red and olive or black with copper ribbing are productive when the trout selectively key on color.

The life cycle of the chironomid: Larvae spend most of their life in and around vegetated bottoms and mud. The larvae stage of some chironomids contain hemoglobin and these appear red and are referred to as bloodworms. When the chironomids make the transition from the larva stage to the pupa stage is when they become most vulnerable to feeding trout.

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As midge pupae ascend to the surface, their wiggling motion causes oxygen to build up in between the pupal shuck and adult body it contains. This increases the buoyancy of the pupae as it moves up and down, gradually angling towards the surface. This up and down movement is what feeding trout key on.

Once the pupae get to the surface, they can take up to an hour to create an opening in the surface film.



Midge Pupae hanging in the surface film

When midge pupae hang in the surface film, they will often assume a horizontal position, wriggling to find a weak point in the film to emerge. I have observed cruising trout gulping hundreds of midge pupae in the surface film.





Chironomid Shuck

When the midge pupae penetrate through the meniscus, the pupa's head and thorax begin to enlarge as gas between the pupal case and body expands and ruptures the pupal skin. This allows the fully winged adult to emerge on the water's surface.

Shucks floating in the water is an obvious sign that midge pupae have hatched.

Midge Adult

Hardly a day goes by on the water without some chironomid species hatching. When a hatch occurs, that brief period offers anglers some potentially exciting dry fly action.

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After the midge has emerged it mates, and the eggs are deposited on the surface in a gelatinous mass. The larva develops inside the egg and the larva descends to the bottom of the lake. Bright green and red are the predominate colors of the larvae stage, but they also can be found in shades of tan, dark red, and brown.

The larvae resemble a small thread attached to a head, and it feeds on organic matter. Larvae go through four molts before changing into the pupa stage.



Methods of presentation: My UV Midge pattern was productive no matter what method of presentation I used: dropping it under an indicator, casting and retrieving in shallow water, or fishing along shallow shoreline edges.

Floating line: This seven-pound rainbow was taken using a #10 UV Midge on Pronghorn Ranch Lake near Klamath Falls, Oregon.



Only a small section of the lake remained unfrozen. Using a floating line with an indicator and a slow hand twist to provide movement to the fly, this knuckle-busting seven-pound rainbow broke my rod while I landed it.

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Cortland Camo Intermediate Full Sinking Line:

I have found the midge pattern productive in early spring, especially when cool water temperatures still inhibit the emergence of insects other than midges. This rainbow was caught using a midge pattern with Cortland's Camo Intermediate Full Sinking Line.

I caught this beauty casting into shallow shoreline areas during a spring fishing trip to Piedmont Reservoir in Ft. Bridger, WY. The windy conditions provided the necessary cover for cruising trout along shallow shoreline areas. I hooked this rainbow trout using a slow, short, four-inch retrieve. The trout instantly hit the fly and the fight was on as he ran, taking the line all the way into the backing.



Cortland 7-Foot Intermediate Sink Tips Line:

Trout were focused on feeding close to the surface. To keep the fly in the top feet, I was casting and retrieving using Cortland's 7-Foot Intermediate Sink Tip line.

After casting, I paused before I started to strip the line. Once I started the retrieve, this tiger trout was already on the hook - he had taken the fly during the pause. The pause allows the fly to sink which mirrors the natural movement of a pupae moving up and down as they slowly ascend to the surface. The tiger hit the fly like a freight train.



My UV Midge pattern is certainly a pattern that I have found to be productive in stillwater habitats. The pattern is suggestive of either as a pupae or the larva stage of the chironomid, depending upon the method of presentation.

If you would like to be notified when this fly is available send me your contact information at vickieloftus@stillwateradventure.com

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