

## **Old-Fashioned Scud**

On a recent trip to the Current, I was amazed at the parade of fisherman “fishing through” from about 9am until about 4pm. That was on a weekday, so our fish are really getting pressured seven days a week. As usual, most were throwing jigs, glow balls, and buggers - and not having much to show for it. When I see that kind of pressure, it reminds me of the old days on the Maramec dodging canoes during the mid day “aluminum hatch”. I used to take a break during that time until I stood and watched the fish go into feeding mode as the water got agitated. It was scud time. Watching all those fishermen stomp up and down, and back and forth across the river reminded me that the fish do adapt.

I tied on a long 6X tippet to a weighted scud, and 7X tippet to an unweighted scud dropper, downsized to a ¼” indicator and went back to catching fish between the people wading through where they should have been fishing. Not all scuds are created equal, though. If you’ve ever been to a Stream Team event or spent time turning over rocks and pulling up watercress, you’ve seen actual live scuds. They are smaller and thinner than most commercially tied patterns, and are much more subtly colored – almost clear in many cases. In addition, when they are swimming they are not nearly as curved as most scud hooks. I still use scud hooks, but I don’t tie as far down around the bend as most. I tie weighted and unweighted versions mostly in tan or gray. I kind of gave up on all the color variations when I found just the right color blend.

### **Materials**

- Hook: Firehole Barbless #321 Scud Hook or #633 Standard Nymph Hook Sizes 14-20
- Weight: Appropriately-Sized Lead Wire (.01 - .015) OPTIONAL
- Thread: Red, Tan, or Orange Veevus 14/0
- Tail: Light Tan Partridge Feather Fibers
- Ribbing: Clear 5X Mono Tippet
- Shell Back: Slip of 3mil Clear Poly Bag
- Body: Dave Whitlock SLF Tan Scud Dubbing

### **Tying Steps**

1. Secure hook in vise and add lead wire wraps if weighting your fly. Leave room at both ends to start and finish your fly. Start thread 1 eye-length from the eye and wrap to the lead wraps. Wrap to the back of the lead wraps and then back and forth a couple of times to secure it in place ending with your thread behind the lead. If no lead, just wrap a smooth layer of thread from the eye to the end of the hook shank. If you are using the standard nymph hook, wrap slightly around the bend.
2. Tie in all your materials between the bend and the lead – remember you’re trying to make a slim fly.
3. Strip off 5 or 6 fibers from the partridge feather and tie in as a tail about ½ the length of the body and trim excess.
4. With a pair of pliers, flatten the end of your mono material and tie in on the far side of the hook at the base of the tail.

5. Trim a slip of 3mil clear plastic to just less than the hook gap and taper one end. in centered on top of the hook by the tapered end.
6. Dub a thin but shaggy body to just behind the hook eye. Using your dubbing brush, brush the dubbing down toward the belly of the fly to form the legs.
7. Pull the plastic forward on top of the fly and secure at the head. Make sure it is centered and the plastic will extend about half-way down each side of the fly.
8. Using the mono , spiral wrap evenly to the fly head and secure. Use a bodkin to separate the dubbing so it does not all get bound down while ribbing. Trim the excess. Coat an inch of thread with super glue and make your whip-finish. Trim thread.
9. Go back and brush out the bottom of the fly to maximize the leggy-ness. Use a smooth-jawed pliers to gently squeeze the scud to flatten a bit if it is too round. Again, look at a live scud.

Scuds can be strong swimmers, but in faster water where trout often feed, they are at the mercy of the current. I fish these dead-drift either in tandem as described above, or as a dropper behind a heavier fly. I also color-code my scuds – red heads for weighted and orange heads for unweighted. Typically, I use the unweighted as droppers, and he weighted either alone or as the top fly. If you're guessing what to tie on when nothing else seems to be present, you cannot go wrong with a scud – a properly tied scud.

