

Fly of the Month – November 2020

Redfish Shrimp Pattern

There are still fishing opportunities in the midst of the great pandemic of 2020. Do your homework, see whose positivity rate is rising and whose is falling, find places to stay that limit exposure, and finally look for a place that has quality fishing and amenities that are actually open. We chose Charleston, South Carolina. Apparently Captain Chris Wilson of FinAddict Fly & Light Tackle guide service has ties to St. Louis. His wife is from the St. Louis Area and he frequents (or used to frequent) the area fly shops before the pandemic limited his travels.

Charleston also has a lot of things to keep you busy while not fishing offering great beaches, great history, great restaurants, and local breweries all without actually being overtly “touristy”. We stayed in a VRBO rental house on James Island – kind of a suburb of Charleston – that was within 20 minutes of everything we wanted to do. The third week of October should have been ideal schooling redfish time, but we were just a bit too early. As the weather cools, the bait fish tend to bug out for warmer water leaving mostly shrimp and crabs for the redfish to feed on. The cooler water also moves the shrimp and crabs out of the marshes and creeks and out into the warmer mud flats to the waiting schools of redfish.

The cooler weather had not come yet, so the fish were still scattered and chasing everything from shrimp to not-yet-migrating mullet making them tough to target with a fly. We were limited to low tide opportunities, so half-day trips were the order of the day. Chris was able to locate a lot of cruising fish giving us daily opportunities, but fishing was tough with so much forage in the shoals. Still, we did boat a number of very solid reds, sea trout, and flounder.

We caught most of our trout on hot pink or fluorescent chartreuse Clouser Minnows, and all the reds and flounder on a tan shrimp fly. As with most guides, he has about a dozen favorite proven patterns that are durable and easy to tie. With all the marsh grass and oyster bars, fly mortality is fairly high. Replacements need to be ready to go and not too complicated.
Basic Redfish Shrimp fly

Materials

- Hook: Gamakatsu Saltwater Hook #4-6
- Thread: 6/0 Tan
- Weighted Eyes: Silver Bead Chain Eyes or Painted Lead Eyes depending on water depth
- Weed Guard: 30# Hard Mono
- Legs: Barred Sili-Legs – Tan or Clear & Black
- Eyes: (Optional) Mono Eyes
- Body: SLF Saltwater Dubbing Tan & Brown mixed

Tying Steps

1. Secure hook in vise and start thread behind hook eye and advance to hook bend. Coat with super glue.
2. Place two sections of weed guard mono – one on each side of the hook sticking out well beyond the hook eye – and wrap down with thread back to just short of the hook eye. Super glue this too.

3. Secure weighted eyes on top of the hook shank at the point just to the rear of where you stopped wrapping down the weed guard mono. This will be important when you finish the fly.
4. Advance the thread to the hook bend and tie in a small tuft of teased-out dubbing on top of the hook and comb out to the rear. Tie in four sections of Barred Sili-Legs about twice the hook length – two on each side. This is where you would tie in the Mono-Eyes if you are using them. Chris did not.
5. Form a dubbing loop and fill with the blended colors of Saltwater SLF – it has longer fibers than regular SLF dubbing – and twist into a dubbing brush. You will need to comb it out as you twist.
6. Wrap the dubbing brush about half-way forward, tie in another pair of Sili-Legs on each side, and then continue dubbing to the weighted eyes.
7. Brush out the dubbing. Trim the front half so that it tapers from the eyes to the rear that will remain untrimmed.
8. Fold the mono weed guards so they are perpendicular to the hook forming a V and secure with several thread wraps to get it to stay there. Add more superglue and whip-finish.

Chris tied these with bead chain eyes, medium lead eyes, and large lead eyes for different water depths and water flows. He also ties these in tan, brown, and black/purple for different water colors and times of the year. These can also be tied with EP Brushes of various widths and color schemes, but they tend to be expensive. Also keep in mind that if you fish with a guide, you probably will not need to tie any flies, but this one could also mimic a crayfish in Missouri's trout and smallmouth rivers.

Mike Ott, Fly-Tying Chair, Ozark Fly Fishers

