



WASATCH FLIES

Field Guide

Bugs, flies, rigs & knots for
Northern Utah's mountain streams and alpine lakes

by David Blackett, fly maker
Wasatch Flies · Wasatch Fly Fisher

Welcome

Thanks for fishing my flies.

I've spent 47 years on the water, and most days come down to one question: what are the fish eating right now? This little guide is my answer, kept short enough to read on the tailgate.

Inside you'll find the bugs that matter in Northern Utah, when they hatch, which of my flies to tie on, and the rigs and knots I use every day. Every fly I sell is meticulously tied and fished hard before it ever goes in a box.

Keep it in your pack, get it wet, and let me know how you do.

— **David Blackett**

Fly maker, Wasatch Flies · Guide, Wasatch Fly Fisher

Use this guide as a starting point, not a rulebook. Elevation, snowpack and runoff shift everything by weeks.

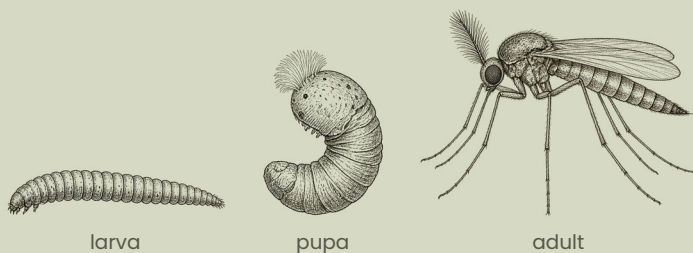
How to Pick a Fly

Before you open the box, look at the water.

1. **Watch first.** Spend two minutes looking. Rises, bugs in the air, shucks in the foam. Flip a rock and see what crawls.
2. **Match size first.** If the bugs are small, go small. A fly the right size in the wrong color beats the reverse.
3. **Then the profile.** Skinny or bulky, long or short. Hold your fly next to the bug.
4. **Color last.** Go a shade darker than you think. Dull natural tones fool more fish than bright ones.
5. **Fish the right level.** No rises? Most of the eating is under the surface. Get a nymph down near the bottom.
6. **Change after ten good drifts.** If nothing happens, change depth first, then size, then fly.

When in doubt: a small copper-bead nymph, size 16–18, fished deep. That's why The Real McCoy is my best seller.

Midges



Tiny two-winged flies that hatch every month of the year. In winter they may be the only bug on the water, and trout eat them by the hundreds.

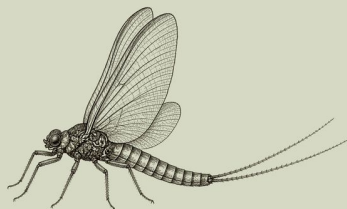
- **Size:** #18–24
- **When:** All year, peak in winter and early spring
- **Look for:** Clusters on the surface, tiny rings in slow water
- **Wasatch Flies:** Real McCoy Micro, Tungsten Blue Grey & Copper

Fly maker's tip: Fish a small midge or micro nymph as the dropper under a dry, or as the point fly on a tight line.

Mayflies



nymph



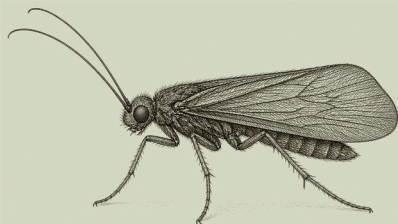
adult

Upright sailboat wings and two or three long tails. Blue-Winged Olives come on cool, cloudy days in spring and fall. PMDs, March Browns and Green Drakes fill in the warmer months.

- **BWOs:** #18–22, Mar–Apr and Sep–Nov
- **PMDs:** #14–18, May–Aug
- **Green Drakes:** #10–12, late June–August
- **Wasatch Flies:** The Real McCoy, Tungsten Blue Grey & Copper

Fly maker's tip: PMD timing depends on elevation and water temperature. Lower, warmer water hatches first. Higher water comes weeks later.

Caddis

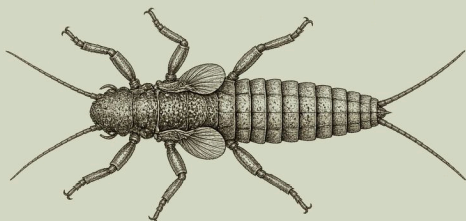


Moth-like flies with wings folded like a tent. They hatch fast and skitter, so fish often chase them. Larvae live on the bottom, many in little cases.

- **Size:** #14–18
- **Mother's Day Caddis:** Mid-spring, before runoff
- **Summer/fall caddis:** June–October, evenings
- **Wasatch Flies:** Tungsten Caddis Green & Copper

Fly maker's tip: A green-bodied nymph swung up at the end of the drift imitates a rising pupa. Hang on.

Stoneflies



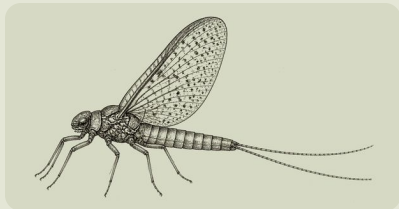
Big, flat bugs with two tails and wings folded flat over the back. They crawl out on rocks to hatch, so look for empty shucks on boulders. Salmonflies are here in Northern Utah, along with golden stones and little yellow sallies.

- **Salmonflies & goldens:** #4–10, peak in June
- **Yellow sallies:** #14–16, June–July
- **Look for:** Shucks on rocks, big bugs on streamside willows
- **Wasatch Flies:** Olive Warrior, Brown Sugar Perdigon (sallies)

Fly maker's tip: Stonefly nymphs live in fast, rocky water all year. A heavy nymph on the bottom works even when nothing is hatching.

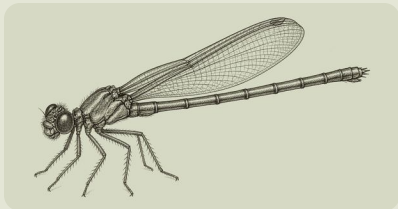
Lake Bugs

Alpine lakes have their own menu. They usually open after runoff and run 2–4 weeks behind valley water.



Callibaetis

Speckle-winged lake mayfly.
May–July, #14–18. Fish nymphs slowly near weed beds.



Damselfs

Slender swimmers. **Late June through mid-summer**, #10–14. Slow strips toward shore.

Chironomids

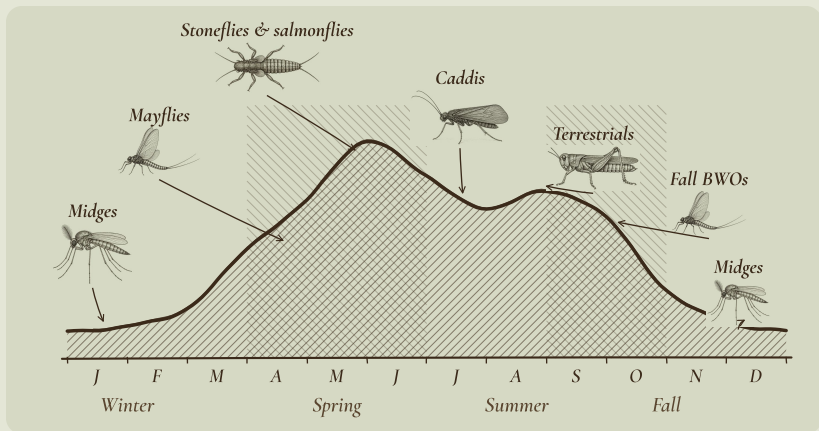
Lake midges, the biggest food source in stillwater. #12–18. Hang one under an indicator just off the bottom. Try the Real McCoy Micro.

Leeches & scuds

On the menu all year. Slow strips with a dark fly, or a small copper nymph for scuds.

Bug Trends

Trout food follows the seasons. Midges carry the cold months, spring brings mayflies and big stoneflies, and summer belongs to caddis and land bugs. When fall cools the water, small olives return before winter settles back to midges.



▨ insect activity ▨ David's guiding windows: Apr–Jun, Sep–Oct

- **Winter:** midges, scuds and slow, deep nymphing.
- **Spring:** BWOs, then PMDs, caddis and stoneflies. Salmonflies peak around June.
- **Summer:** evening caddis, damsels on lakes, hoppers and ants.
- **Fall:** BWOs come back, terrestrials hang on, then midges again.

Relative activity, not a forecast. Higher, colder water runs weeks behind.

Hatch Calendar 1 of 2

Mountain streams. Hook sizes in #. Picks in italics.

■ peak ■ present □ guide season Apr–Jun, Sep–Oct

Bug	#	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Midges <i>Real McCoy Micro</i>	18–24	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Blue-Winged Olives (Baetis) <i>Blue Grey & Copper</i>	18–22	□	□	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
March Browns <i>The Real McCoy</i>	12–14	□	□	□	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Mother's Day Caddis <i>Caddis Green & Copper</i>	14–16	□	□	□	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Caddis (summer/fall) <i>Caddis Green & Copper</i>	14–18	□	□	□	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Salmonflies & Golden Stones <i>Olive Warrior*</i>	4–10	□	□	□	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Yellow Sallies <i>Brown Sugar Perdigon</i>	14–16	□	□	□	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
PMDs (Pale Morning Duns) <i>Brown Sugar Perdigon</i>	14–18	□	□	□	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Green Drakes <i>Olive Warrior*</i>	10–12	□	□	□	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■

PMDs: timing depends on elevation and water temperature. Lower, warmer water first.

Hatch Calendar 2 of 2

Late season and alpine lakes.

■ peak ■ present □ guide season Apr–Jun, Sep–Oct

Bug	#	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Tricos	20–24												
Terrestrials (hoppers, ants, beetles)	8–18												
October Caddis	8–10												
Mahogany Duns <i>Brown Sugar Perdigon</i>	14–16												
Scuds & Sow Bugs <i>The Real McCoy</i>	12–18												
Leeches & Streamers <i>Purple Dart*</i>	4–10												
Damsels (lakes) <i>Olive Warrior*</i>	10–14												
Callibaetis (lakes)	14–18												
Chironomids (lakes) <i>Real McCoy Micro</i>	12–18												

* A close match from the Wasatch lineup; any similar pattern in the right size will work. Alpine lakes and high streams run 2–4 weeks behind valley water.

Wasatch Flies Picks 1 of 2



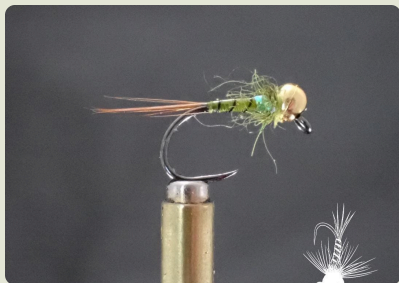
Tungsten Blue Grey & Copper

#16-18 · 3.3 mm BWOs and midges. Fish it deep on a tight line or under an indicator on cool, cloudy days.



Tungsten Caddis Green & Copper

#16 · 2.8/3.3 mm Caddis larvae and pupae. Dead drift, then let it swing up at the end.



Olive Warrior

#16 · 2.8 mm Searching nymph for stoneflies, drakes and damselfly. A great point fly.



Brown Sugar Perdigon

#16-20 · 2.8/3.3 mm Slim, fast-sinking perdigon for PMDs, yellow sallies and mahogany duns. Fish it on a tight line in faster runs.

Wasatch Flies Picks 2 of 2



Jack Daniels Nymph

#16 • 2.8/3.3 mm Brown mayfly nymphs. Use as the dropper in a two-nymph rig.



Jim Beam Lemonade

#16 • 2.8/3.3 mm A bright attractor nymph for yellow sallies and off-color water.



Purple Dart

#14–16 • 3.3 mm Attractor when nothing else works. Great in stillwater and after a rain.

Every Wasatch Flies pattern is meticulously tied and fished in Northern Utah before it goes in the shop. See them all at wasatchflies.etsy.com.

The Real McCoy



My best seller, and the first fly I'd tie on almost anywhere.

- **Sizes:** #16, #18, #20
- **Bead:** copper tungsten, 2.8 or 3.3 mm, on a barbless jig hook
- **Body:** copper tinsel, golden brown dubbing, CDC collar
- **Imitates:** mayfly nymphs, caddis and scuds

How to fish it: Point fly on a tight line, or below an indicator in riffles and runs. Lighter sizes make a great dropper under a dry.

"100% fish catchers especially tight line nymphing them!" — Jeffrey, Etsy review

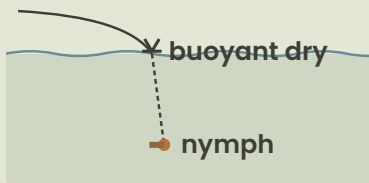
Box of 10 · also in a Real McCoy Micro box

Five Simple Rigs



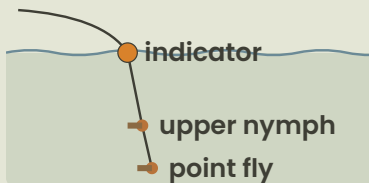
Dry fly

Rising fish. 9 ft 5X leader.



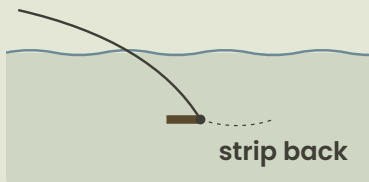
Dry-dropper

Fish rising and eating below. Tie the nymph to the dry's hook bend.



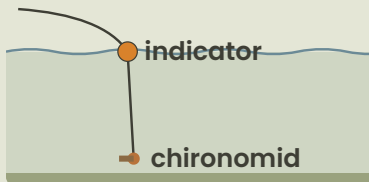
Nymph

Most days. Indicator about 1.5× the water depth.



Streamer

Big fish, cloudy days. 0X–2X, strip it back.



Stillwater

Alpine lakes. Set depth so the fly hangs just off bottom.

Three Knots

Improved Clinch Tippet to fly



Thread through eye, wrap 5–7 times, back through the first loop, then through the big loop. Wet it, pull snug, trim.

Surgeon's Knot Tippet to leader



Lay lines side by side, form a loop, pass both tag ends through twice. Wet and pull all four ends evenly.

Perfection Loop Loop in leader butt



Loop the tag behind the line, make a second loop in front, pass the tag between them, pull the second loop through the first. Snug it.

Etiquette & Catch and Release

On the water

- Give other anglers room. If in doubt, ask.
- Don't wade through water someone is fishing.
- Leave no trace. Pack out line and tippet.
- Clean, inspect and dry waders between waters.

Releasing fish

- Use barbless hooks or pinch the barb.
- Keep fish in the water and wet your hands.
- Use a rubber net and forceps. Work fast.
- Hold it facing upstream until it swims off.
- On hot afternoons above 68°F, give the fish a rest and fish early.

Know and follow current Utah DWR regulations.

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\$585

1 angler

\$850

2 anglers

\$425

per angler, 3+

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