

Fishing the Diamond Hair Streamer

by Carl Haensel

Fishing across western Pennsylvania a few years ago I came across a gentleman fishing for channel catfish using small sunfish. These tiny fish that he was using for bait were caught on a lightweight rod and were in the 3- to 5-inch range. I was casting a small, narrow streamer on the same river, hoping to tempt a few smallmouth bass to bite, but I'd been having no luck. As I sat down to change flies, I watched the man catch about four smallmouth bass on the sunfish. Then the light went on in my head! A larger-profiled pattern that imitated small, wounded sunfish in the slow-moving water would be perfect for catching the bass, which obviously weren't feeding on slimmer, faster minnows.



Photo: Carl Haensel

Diamond Hair streamers have solved this problem. They belong to a group of modern streamer patterns that have originated in the past 10 years. They are born of the many varieties of fine synthetic fibers that are on the market. They require a different fishing style than "standard" streamers, which tend to have less wind resistance relative to the size of the fly.

Since they can either be unweighted or have lead added for weight, you may wish to have a variety of them to cover different situations. These flies also have much larger eyes than classic streamers, which many anglers consider key to their success. Their bulk exhibited when dry and while casting quickly changes when they're in the water. The fine fibers pulsate and undulate as you strip in the fly, and in patterns like the Diamond Hair Streamer, their movement gives off much sparkle in the water when the light catches it.

As you may guess, casting these flies can be a challenge in larger sizes, especially if they are tied overly thick. More than once on a windswept day I've bounced one off of my head or shoulder while casting for striped

bass on the lower Delaware River. The smallmouth-sized versions cast a little easier, and trout versions, slightly smaller, are a piece of cake.

Keep an open casting loop to avoid injury. Fishing these streamers should happen when the conditions are right. Observe which types of baitfish are in the river or lake that you are fishing. If they have a wider body profile, give this streamer a shot. It shines in near-surface activity such as when a school of shad is pushed to the surface by actively feeding fish. Cast it into the fray and quickly strip it back to your position. If you don't hook up right away, try letting it sink through the school of bait

before beginning your retrieve.

Anglers may find it worthwhile to fish unweighted versions of the Diamond Hair Streamer on a sink-tip or sinking line. The streamer's light weight is very effective at enticing fish, and the sinking aspect of the line will put it in the right location.

You can enjoy excellent success with this pattern in this type of situation in larger mainstem rivers such as the Susquehanna, Delaware, Monongahela, Allegheny and Ohio using this technique. Trout feeding on larger-bodied prey such as shiners and fallfish will hit this pattern as well on larger trout streams. Anglers fishing the upper Allegheny River may want to carry a few of these flies for their next trip. Look for sunfish-colored versions of this fly to be particularly effective on largemouth bass and smallmouth bass in still or slower water. This fly excels when you fish it as a wounded sunfish, and this way it can trigger strikes when no other fly can. Try retrieving an unweighted version with jerks and pauses to entice those bass that you just know are out there in your favorite pond. ☐