

Tom Thumb

Dry Fly – Caddis



This is one of the most popular dry flies in western Alberta and throughout British Columbia. Generally, we use it on stillwaters only when large “brown sedge” caddis are hatching. It can be effective when the adults are on the surface, drying their wings prior to their initial flight. It’s not my first choice, but at times it becomes the “only fly.”

Admittedly, tying a Tom Thumb in size 16 can be a challenge for those who have matched my chronological status and eyesight; however, it has been my experience that the size of this fly is critical. I’ve watched many people fish these without success, then loudly decry the Tom Thumb as a British Columbia fly that works only on those waters. This is not true. More likely they bought one size in the shops, and too large at that, then expect selective trout feeding on size 16 caddis to snap up their size 8 offering. Such thinking would be taboo on any stream, but somehow lake anglers have escaped not only the traditional currents -- but also common sense and reason.

This is not only a trout fly. Some of the greatest times I’ve had came when floating them over and around boulders, taking goldeyes and rock bass until my arms hurt from fighting fish, and my sides hurt from laughing at their antics. And yes, I must also admit to sniggling many a carp that rolled oh-so-comically to an inverted position in order to suck in a Tom Thumb from the surface.

This is **the** stillwater dry fly. Tie them in abundant sizes, and have them ready when the first rises begin.

Pattern

Hook	16-8 2X long
Thread	Black or Brown
Tail	Deer Hair
Body	Deer Hair

Tying Instructions:

It has been my experience that many tie the Tom Thumb in sizes too large. Tie a selection, keeping them to the dimensions of the insects you normally see on the surface. For caddis imitations I set the hair wing ahead to emulate the large brown sedges so prevalent on western waters. For mayfly versions the fly should be tied sparsely and the wing swept up and back. For mayflies, I often bend the hair back and tie it up at 45 degrees, and may trim it for a less bulky outline.

1. Wrap thread rearward around shank until even with hook point, than back to the center.
2. Select small clump of hair for tail. Position it on top of shank so the tips extend one hook gap-length beyond bend. Trim butts slightly beyond center. Wrap tightly back to the hook point. Cement hair on shank.
3. Cut clump of hair about three times the diameter of tail. Position it on top of the shank so the tips extend about 1.5 to 2 shank-lengths beyond the bend (this determines the length of the wings). Hold hair firmly in place as you make two loose wraps around the butts and shank, then pull down slowly to tighten. The butts should spiral down around the shank, creating a ragged, uneven body that aids in flotation. Make well-spaced wraps back to the hook point, then forward to about 1/8-inch behind the eye.
4. Gather long hair together and fold forward to form the back. Make two loose wraps around hair and shank; slowly draw tight, than make two more tight wraps.
5. Lift hair tips up and back to form wing, then wrap thread under front base of wing to hold it upright. Form head, tie off, trim and cement. Trim any overly long hairs from the underbody, but leave it fuzzy and ragged -- an important part of the body.