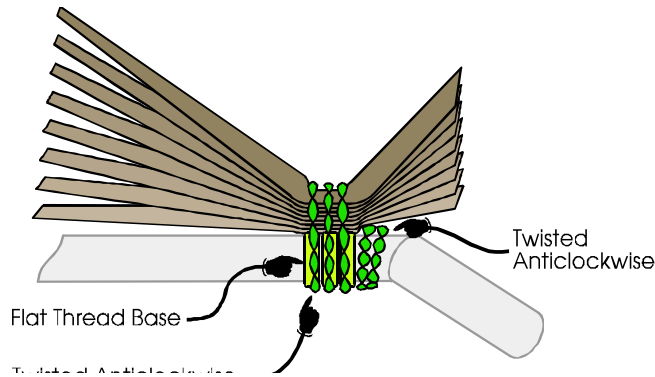


A Method For Locking Deer/Elk Hair Wings

by Wayne Luallen

Many tiers, including myself, have been frustrated with their Elk Hair and/or Deer Hair Caddis wings when they fish them. After only a few fish, the wing comes loose and twists around the hook shank. The problem is that the thread mounted simply over the hair butts is not adequate to hold the wing in place. There is a solution, but it is not placing 49 more wraps of thread around the hair! The solution is not more thread, but rather it is the proper placement of thread to apply the most force.

When placing the first thread wraps onto the hook, begin with the thread just shy of the eye, but at the exact point behind the eye that you wish for the wing to ultimately be mounted. When it comes time to mount the wing, secure it directly on top of the forward-most wraps of the base thread with a few wraps of well-twisted thread. This does several things: (1) the base thread on the hook acts as a friction point; (2) as with a rope, flat untwisted fibers are not as strong as when they are twisted (to a point); (3) twisted tying thread is narrower than flat thread, so it bites deeper into the wing, thus pinching the hair onto the base thread tighter. If the twisted thread causes the hair to flair too much, simply untwist it for the last couple



of wraps and wind the now-flat thread back over the shoulder of the wing. Finally, bring the thread immediately in front of and under the butt ends of the wing, push four or five whip-finish wraps back against the point where the wing has been secured to the shank. These can be twisted or untwisted wraps, but since twisted thread is stronger it will bite deeper under the wing and up against the flat base wraps, thus compressing them upward into the wing. When tightening the whip finish knot pull the thread in the direction of the hook bend. These wraps will slip easily into position against the hair base (held down from

above) since they are sliding on the bare portion of the hook shank that was intentionally left directly in front of the wing. With or even without pre-waxed thread, this wedged whip-finish is so secure that it really does not require any head cement.

An additional step adds even greater security. If the fly has not had the wing butts trimmed before tying onto the thread base, before such a fly is whip finished, place additional twisted (narrow) wraps through the first third of the untrimmed wing butts. Be sure that the thread pressure is applied while lifting upward to avoid twisting the wing butts. Repeat this two more times through the remaining two thirds of the butts. It is important that each wrap be made tightly adjacent the initial tie down point of the wing so that the head size does not become unsightly. To complete the fly, whip finish as described above, and trim the butts of hair to proper length.