

Changing Course- Fishing with Midges with Ronnie Hall of The Fish Hawk



Ronnie with his fish caught on a pink 22 tungsten bead silver ribbed midge

Times are changing. The days of dredging big flashy nymphs under tennis ball sized neon strike indicators to catch hard fished over trout are closing fast. It's time to change your tactics and improve your technique. It's time to go small to catch more and bigger fish.

Over the past decade, for some reason unknown to me, our southern hatches of caddis and mayflies have diminished, but midge hatches have become more profuse. Except on the South Holston, I can't remember the last time I saw a heavy sulfur hatch that brought big head and tail risers sipping rhythmically on the surface. It seemed that in springs past on most tailwaters I fished that every evening would bring on a swarm of migrating caddis that rivaled a Fargo blizzard. Afternoons of mid-day slashing rises of foot and a half sized brown trout chasing emerging caddis pupae are just fond memories now. Because of this trend, I've condescended to fish the lowly midge and a whole new world of fishing has opened up to me, and it's very enjoyable.

The first thing you need to consider for midge fishing is your tackle. An eight foot, eight inch Scott G2 in three weight has become my chosen rod. A Nautilus number 3/4 my reel, and a Scientific Angler double taper Mastery Trout three weight my line. I use a fourteen foot Trout Hunter leader. Don't be intimidated. This leader turns over better than any I have cast, even the ones I hand tie.

There are hundreds, maybe thousands of midge patterns. I've condensed mine into a small selection that prove to be the most productive. My favorite is a blood midge ribbed with fine silver wire. I tie this pattern plain, with plastic beads, and as well with tungsten beads. I've had great success with this pattern on the Toccoa tailwater, and this past

summer I smoked the big selective trout on the Missouri with them. If trout are taking pupa just below the surface fish a beadless pattern or one with a plastic bead. If there is no surface activity fish deep with the tungsten bead. I've had good success with the Jujube midge in red, brown, and black. A Mayhem is excellent on the surface as is the Sprout patterns in gray, white and black. Pink, silver ribbed pupa with a tungsten bead works wonders on the pellet head stream like the Soque, Frog Hollow and Maulden Creek. I fish these patterns in sizes 22 to 28. Sometimes the tiny sized flies make an enormous difference, especially on tailwaters.

Lastly, but as important as pattern, is the New Zealand strike indicator. The N Z indicator is the only indicator I will use fishing midge larva or pupa. It consists of a tuft of unwashed wool and a slice of plastic tubing. I use it because it can be made small enough so it doesn't spook feeding fish laying near the surface when cast, or when it floats inches above a holding fish. With a little more wool, it is buoyant enough to float tungsten patterns down to a size 14. If a fish sniffs your pattern you'll know.