

THE HELGAMIGHT

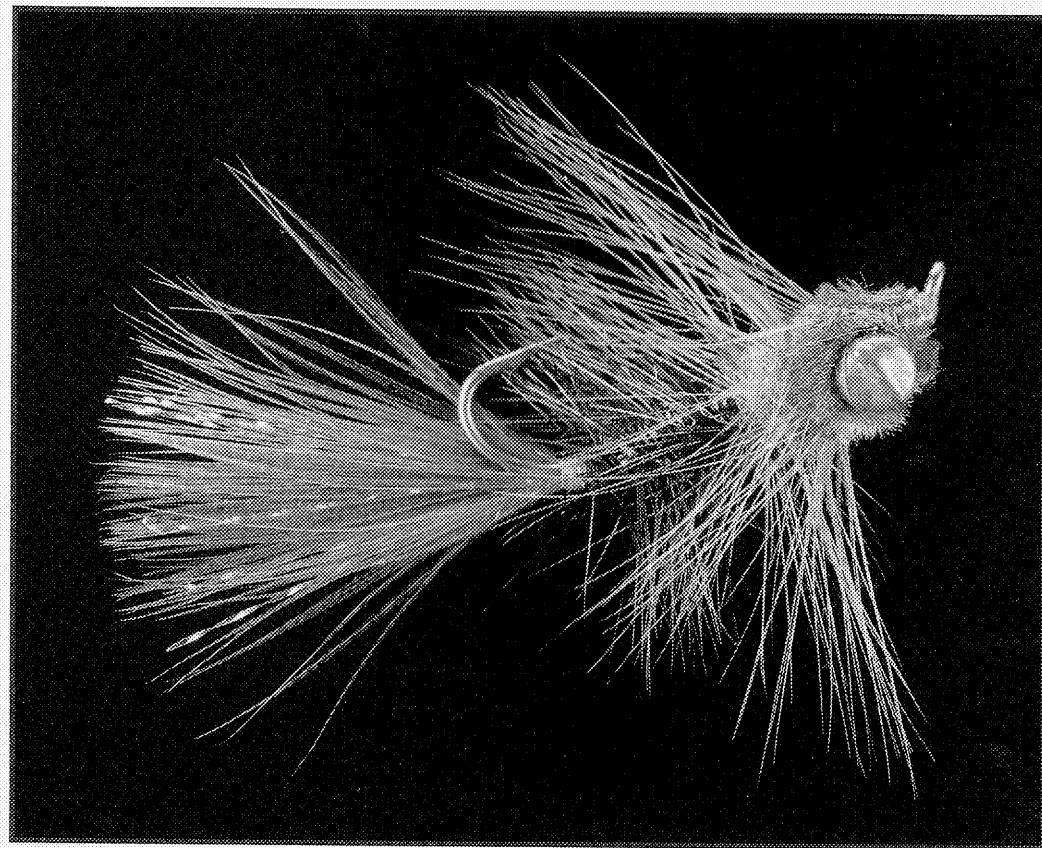
**MANY WARMWATER SPECIES
OF FISH FEED ON LARGE NYMPHS.
TRY THIS PATTERN THE NEXT
TIME YOU VISIT YOUR LOCAL POND.**

COLUMN BY BRIAN M. WIPRUD
PHOTOS BY DAVID KLAUSMEYER

An angler is lucky to stumble upon a go-to fly a couple of times in a lifetime. This doesn't necessarily mean that it will catch every species of fish; that's an impossible order. What a go-to pattern will do is catch just about any fish in the waters of a given region.

My home waters are the lakes and streams of the Northeast, and my go-to fly is the HelgaMight. The HelgaMight catches my local fish under a wide range of conditions, especially in the early season. The idea for the HelgaMight started when I began fishing lakes in earnest. I found the large diversity of insects a daunting subject to master. Unlike a stream, where you can often walk and look for insects, a lake has a huge volume of water and a deep bottom that is impossible to explore.

The docks, rocks, and trees along the lakeshore revealed shucks of emerging dragonflies and other nymphs. There were a lot of these bugs, many a half-inch or longer. I began inspecting the stomach contents of the fish I was catching and found



Inspired by the Woolly Bugger, the HelgaMight includes the fish-attracting features of several warmwater nymphs.

that they were loaded with nymphs. I identified many of these insects as dragonfly nymphs (Odonata), which have stout thoraxes with long legs. Alderfly nymphs (Megaloptera), which have many small legs growing along their long abdomens, were also prevalent.

BIRTH OF THE HELGAMIGHT

I took a few of those insects back to my tying bench. I studied the dragonfly's dark, husky shape and also noted the alderfly's interesting gradations of color between the segments of its body. I could have tied patterns that were close imitations of each bug, but I believe in exaggerating an insect's traits in an attempt to make a fly irresistible. I also believe in making sure that a fly can get down to the fish and so decided to design a pattern that is weighted in the front to imitate the swimming action of an emerging insect. The inspiration for the HelgaMight came from the Woolly Bugger, a fly that incorporates the enticing qualities of various prey. While the HelgaMight isn't a close imitation of a hellgrammite, it is a general imitation of many of the larger aquatic bugs found in lakes and streams.

The HelgaMight is effective when lake water temperatures rise into the 50s, which coincides with the emergence of many lake insects. The fish are keying on these dark nymphs by the time the water reaches 50 degrees Fahrenheit; this even includes pickerel, a species normally thought of as feeding exclusively on baitfish. During some of the first warm afternoons, pre-spawning bluegills wander into the shallows looking for food and hit the HelgaMight. Early season bass are also highly susceptible to the HelgaMight, and I've had fish of up to four pounds falling for this dark little gem. Stripped slowly and close to the bottom, the HelgaMight can devastate yellow perch and crappie. And it didn't take long for me to start fishing HelgaMights in my favorite smallmouth streams with regular success.

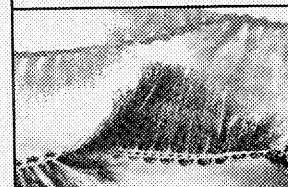
Feel free to substitute materials when tying the HelgaMight. A number of products can be used to tie the dark, sparkly abdomen, and use big, low-quality hackle for palmering over

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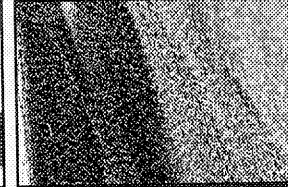
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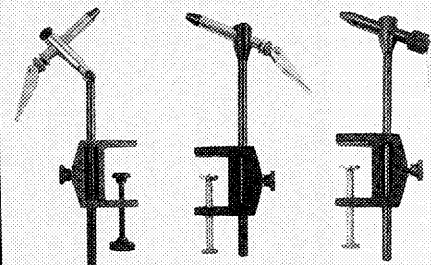
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