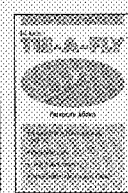
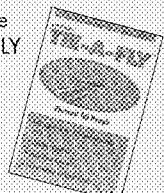


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**FLY  
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Continued from page 65

wet. These materials can take a lot of abuse and one fly will survive several fish.

Though this pattern was designed to imitate the *Okanagana*, use it to mimic any cicada species by changing the color, the body size, and the hook size. I've found that body size is the most important characteristic of a good fly. You can vary leg length, wing length, and body shape to improve a pattern, but the overall size should stay as close to the naturals as possible.

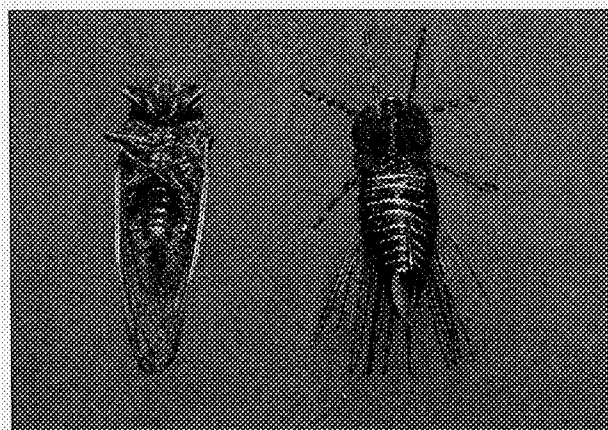
Color is another great way to diversify your cicada patterns, especially since many cicada broods in the East and Midwest have green bodies and veins in their wings. Use black, orange, green, or yellow thread and backing to imitate cicadas in the areas you're fishing. At times the right color is all it takes to start hooking more trout, so if you don't get a response with an all black cicada, try one with yellow or orange thread.

### When and Where

LATE SPRING SNOW STORMS and cold spells are the biggest adversary to cicada emergences, often pushing back peak activity dates by a week or so. Ideal days for cicada activity are sunny and breezy with temperatures in the upper 70s. In years past, cicada fishing in the West was so closely linked to sunny days that it was a waste of time to fish cicada patterns if clouds were blocking the sun. Remember to sit and listen when searching for cicada activity. If the cicadas are active, you hear them in the trees.

Look for cicadas in the trees that line the river, especially deciduous species. If there are cicadas in the trees, chances are

the fish are eating them. If you can't decide if fish are eating cicadas, gently feel the belly of a trout. If you feel hard lumps inside, he's feasting on cicadas. Sometimes you see cicadas inside trout's mouths before they enter the digestive tract.



*The natural's body size is the most important characteristic of a cicada pattern. Vary the wing, leg, and body shapes if it's beneficial, but try to match the overall size of the naturals.*

Don't expect to see masses of bugs on the water. Only occasionally will they try to fly across the river and splash down on the water. Concentrate on the banks where they will either fall or be blown into the water. If you do witness a cicada crashing into the water, wait and see how long it survives. This is a good barometer for how much fish are keying in on them.

### Tactics

EVEN THOUGH THESE are big flies, fish sometimes eat them at a snail's pace, especially on the Green River. One of the most common mistakes made by anglers fishing cicadas is the timing of their hook-set. A good rule of thumb is to set the hook after the fish has taken the fly and turned to go back down to

its lie. If you cannot see the fish well, use a "one-one thousand" count before setting the hook, but first make sure the fish has actually taken the fly. Fish sometimes bump flies two or three times before taking it.

Adjust your fishing speed to the water type. If you are fishing fast water, fish quickly and don't concentrate all your efforts on one spot. Fish holding in fast water typically don't have time to examine flies and will either strike quickly or ignore your fly altogether. When fishing slow water, plan on working the water at a slow pace. Fish sometimes emerge from deep eddies after flies have sat on the water for minutes. The slow approach can work well but requires patience.

Don't worry if your pattern slips the water on the presentation. Often times the vibration on the water gets a fish's attention and will make him take a closer look. Maximize your drifts

by mending the line, but don't pick up and cast again too soon. Many fish follow flies for yards, remaining unseen to anglers until the last second.

Use 3X or 4X tippets when fishing cicada patterns. You can use smaller tippets, but most cicada patterns are large and spin during the cast. Large-diameter tippet is stiffer and reduces spinning. If you encounter an especially active cicada hatch, break out a fast-action 6-weight rod and 0X tippet. The heavier, faster rod makes casting easier and the thicker tippet allows you to land fish quickly so you can get back in the action.

ETHAN EMERY is a former Green River guide. He lives in Denver, Colorado, where he and his wife work with inner-city youth.

## TACTICS FOR SHAD . . .

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**Flies.** The most important aspect of a shad fly is that it be properly weighted to get in front of the fish. Shad won't move far to grab a fly, but they will take a fly drifting in front and just below their mouth. If you are swinging the fly directly in front of them and they're not hitting, add a split-shot, put on a heavier fly, or add a dropper fly to make sure it's down far enough. When they're moving toward the fly but not hitting, fly depth is often the problem. You should frequently feel your fly tapping the bottom. Jig the fly a little to keep it from snagging on the bottom.

Fly color is a much-debated topic, but you can't go wrong with flies with a pink, red, orange, or chartreuse head and a pearlescent body and sparse Krystal Flash tail. Wings and other accoutrements are unnecessary. There are times when shad are picky about color. Once you know you have the drift right in front of them, try changing colors to get them to hit.

A shad's primary food is plankton which, if tied to scale, would be on #22 hooks and smaller. Fortunately, they are willing to strike flies considerably larger. Some theorize that because shad are completely devoid of parallax vision, they aren't good at estimating the size of their prey. My experience is that precise imitations are less effective than simple patterns that accentuate the basic visual

qualities of small crustaceans, primarily their translucent, almost clear bodies and a small dab of color (either greenish digested matter or pinkish oils) in their upper carapaces.

Sometimes you get many strikes and no hookups. When that happens, check the sharpness of your hook and if short strikes persist, change to a smaller fly. The clearer and lower the water, the smaller your fly should be. I use flies weighing 1/16 ounce with a #2 hook down to as small as 1/64 ounce with a #8 hook. Saltwater or heavy-wire trout hooks are excellent. (A 4-pound roe shad in heavy current can do a number on a bronze light-wire hook.) Tie your flies so the hook point rides up to increase the number of hookups in the roof of the mouth (shad's lips are thin and tear easily) and keep the hook point from dulling on the river bottom.

Shad are a fascinating sport fish that exhibit complex and little-understood feeding behavior. Like other fish, their feeding instinct is triggered by a variety of factors and it's up to anglers to put as many of those factors into play as possible. Unlike other fish, shad are only around for a month or so, so you have to make the most of your opportunities.

BRIAN M. WIPRUD authored the books *Pipsqueak* and *Sleep with the Fishes*. His website is [www.wiprud.com/](http://www.wiprud.com/).

## SHAD HOT SPOTS EAST AND WEST

### West Coast Shad

SHAD RUN INTO WEST COAST rivers from April through June. Local fly shops are your best bet for the most detailed information on local conditions, run timing, location, and guides. Here's a quick overview of some of the best shad fishing on the West Coast.

**California.** The **Sacramento River** provides the best-known shad water in the state, but the river is large, deep, and best accessed by boat in its lower reaches. Wading anglers should try the Sacramento in Redding or fish one of its tributaries.

The **Feather River** has numerous good spots between the Oroville Dam and the Sacramento, including the Shanghai Bend downstream from Marysville.

The **Yuba River**, a tributary of the Feather, branches northeast along Route 20, which provides numerous access points.

The **American River** from Nimbus Dam to the Sacramento River has many parking areas just north of the American River Parkway. The islands and channels in this section can split the shad run, so depending on the water level target areas where the whole run is concentrated.

To the north, the **Klamath River**, like the Sacramento, is big shad water. Its tributary, the **Trinity River**, is more accessible and follows Route 299 closely.

**Oregon.** Many of Oregon's coastal rivers have shad runs, but there are some standouts. East of Portland, Bonneville Dam poses a significant obstacle to **Columbia River** shad. As a result, the most popular areas are just

Continued on page 68

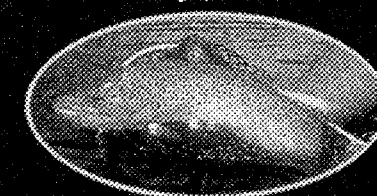
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