



ward's hairy-mara

What do you get when you combine deer hair and marabou?

A fly that catches almost anything that swims.

by Ward Bean

Col. Joseph D. Bates, the author of several classic books about streamers and Atlantic-salmon flies, credits Carrie Stevens for being the first fly tier to use bucktail to form a bullet-style head on a fly. Her streamer was a saltwater pattern called the Reverse-Tied Bucktail.

The basic components of a Reverse-Tied Bucktail are a blue saddle-hackle wing and bucktail tied on at the front of the hook and stroked back to form the bullet-shaped head. In the 1960s, Keith Fulsher developed a family of similar streamers called the Thunder Creek Series. Since then, tiers have used bucktail, deer body hair, and elk hair to create bullet-head dry flies and streamers.

One of my favorite bullet-head streamers is a pattern I call the Hairy-Mara. I tied the first Hairy-Mara late one winter. The following spring and summer, I was delighted when those Hairy-Maras caught a wide variety of fish, including bass, pickerel, walleye, and crappie. It's not a bad trout fly, either.

Made with a reverse-tied deer-hair head and marabou wing, the Hairy-Mara can be dressed as either a topwater slider or a subsurface streamer. My first Hairy-Mara was a yellow-and-olive slider with plastic eyes. To make the Hairy-Mara streamer, simply wrap lead wire around the front of the hook shank before making the reversed head.

I enhance the fish appeal of the Hairy-Mara by adding a few strands of Krystal Flash to the wing, tying some rubber legs between the head and the skirt, and gluing on plastic eyes.

Tips for Tying the Hairy-Mara

The Hairy-Mara is easy to tie and can be made in a variety of sizes and colors. Use straight-eye, Sproat-bend, short-shank hooks such as the Mustad 3366. This hook easily accommodates a weed guard and allows you to position the long marabou wing so that it doesn't foul around the shank.

Hairy-Maras can be tied in a range of colors and sizes. The marabou wings give the flies action, and the bullet-style heads look mighty fishy.

I use marabou blood feathers for the wing because they enhance the Hairy-Mara's action in the water. To control the amount of marabou that you're using, stroke the fibers out from the sides of the quill and strip or cut them off in bunches. Tie on one bunch of marabou at a time; if you're making a multicolored wing, moisten each bunch before tying to the hook. Use fine size 6/0 or 8/0 thread to avoid building up too much bulk.

The head and skirt can be made out of white deer-belly hair dyed in your choice of colors. Bleached and dyed cow elk hair is also a good choice. Deer body hair is not a good choice because it's less coarse and not as durable as the other materials. You will also need to change to a heavier thread for the deer-hair work; Flat Waxed Nylon is my choice, but use any thread that will stand the pressure required to bind the hair to the hook.

To form the bullet head on a size 4 hook, spin and flare a bunch of deer hair about the thickness of a lead pencil behind the hook eyes (The tips of the hairs should be pointing forward.) Bind down the butt ends of the hairs against the hook shank. To complete the head, stroke the tips toward the end of the hook shank with your left hand and hold the hairs in place with several tight wraps of thread.

You can use a variety of leg materials made from silicone, Lycra, nylon, and other materials, but I like old-fashioned Live Rubber. You may even omit tying in the legs, if you wish.

Paint the completed head with a light coat of Flexament thinned almost to the consistency of water. Thinned Flexament adds durability to the head and provides a base on which to glue the eyes. Be sure to keep the glue off the rubber legs; the glue will ruin the rubber.

Allow the Flexament to dry, and add the eyes. I attach doll eyes to my sliders and solid-plastic eyes to the streamers. Household Goop, available at most hardware stores, is an ideal adhesive for gluing the eyes to the head.

Tie up a bunch of Hairy-Maras before your next fishing trip. Make them in different sizes and colors, and tie some with weight and some without. You'll be ready for whatever the fish want—wherever they want it.



Ward Bean, a regular contributor to Fly Tyer, is an avid angler and creative tier who lives in Iowa.

The Mickey Finn Hairy-Mara

Hook: Mustad 3366 or equivalent, size 4.

Thread: Red Uni-Thread for the wing, red Flat Waxed Nylon for the head.

Weed guard: 15-pound-test Mason hard mono.

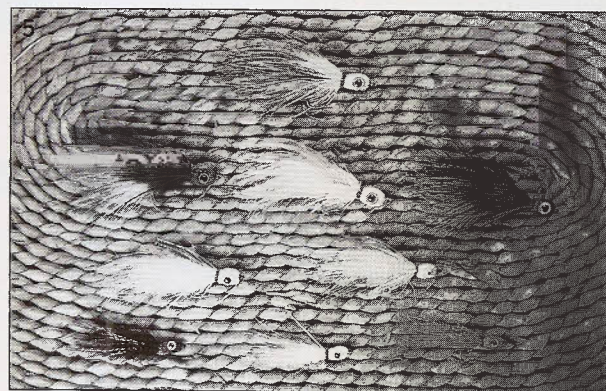
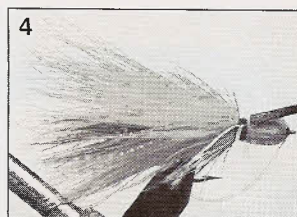
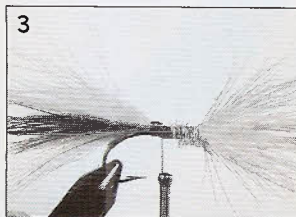
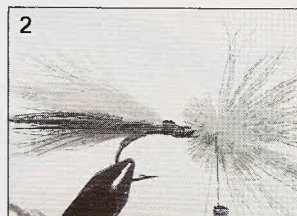
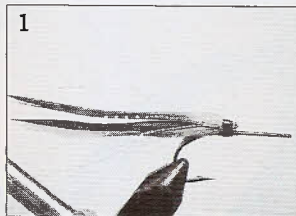
Wing: Yellow and red marabou with strands of pearl Krystal Flash.

Weight: Medium lead wire.

Head and collar: Bright yellow deer belly hair.

Legs: Yellow Live Rubber.

Eyes: Yellow solid plastic eyes.



1 Start the thread at the end of the hook shank. Tie in the piece of hard monofilament down the bend of the hook; we'll complete the weed guard later. Strip a bunch of yellow marabou from a plume, moisten it, and tie it off the end of the hook. Tie a bunch of red marabou on top of the yellow. Tie a second bunch of yellow marabou on top of the red. Add four strands of pearl Krystal Flash to each side of the marabou. Tie off the thread and cement the wraps.

2 Start the Flat Waxed Nylon thread at the hook eye. Cover the hook shank with a layer of thread. Wrap the lead wire from the weed guard to the front end of the shank, but don't crowd the eye. Next, clip a pencil-size bunch of yellow hair, comb out the underfur and short fibers, and even the tips in a hair stacker. Tie on the hair between the last wrap of lead and the hook eye with the tips pointing forward and the butt ends even with the front of the weed guard. Spin and flare the hair.

3 Stroke the hair tips forward and the butts back. Bind the butt ends to the shank with close, tight wraps of thread. Clip any stray butt ends that the thread doesn't catch. Pull back the hair tips. The hair should completely surround the hook shank.

4 Make several tight wraps of thread to bind down the hair to form the collar and bullet head. Tie the legs to the sides of the fly. Tie off the thread in front of the legs. Restart the size 6/0 thread in front of the head. Pull the weed guard under the fly and tie off. Clip any excess mono, tie off the thread, and clip. Coat the head with thinned Flexament.

5 Here are a handful of finished Hairy-Maras. Tie them in a variety of sizes and colors, and go catch fish.