Michael Decoteau’s

Articulated Hollow Flatwing

The concept for this fly began far from what it has become. I was asked to make a larger version of a hairwing steelhead fly that I worked up over the winter that could be used as a swinging fly for freshwater stripers in the south. The first prototypes were tied on shanks and had stinger hooks attached by a rigid wire. The material fouled frequently. By attaching the hook to the shank, and tying materials to both the shank and the hook, the fouling problem was solved.

There is very little that is truly new in the realm of fly tying these days. This pattern draws on Ken Abrams’ flatwings, Bob Popovics hollow fleyes, a variety of modern articulated streamers, and the classic featherwings of the northeastern US.

This fly has a large profile in the water though tied with minimal materials. As a result, it does not take on much water, and remains easy to cast.
Materials for rear portion of the fly:

Hook: Gamakatsu SC15 2/0  
Thread: 6/0 White Uni-thread  
Undertail: Bucktail  
Tail: 4-6 long narrow saddles  
Overtail: Flashabou  
Body: Estaz or flashy chenille, schlappen, copper wire  
Head: Bucktail

Materials for front portion of the fly:

Shank: 1 3/8” (35 mm) Articulated Shank by Fish Skull  
Butt: Synthetic dubbing  
Weight: Large lead eye  
Body: Estaz or flashy chenille, schlappen, copper wire  
Overbody: Flashabou  
Head: Bucktail  
Shoulders: Flank feathers  
Topping: 4-6 long narrow saddles  
Cheeks: Jungle cock

1. Insert 2/0 SC15 into your Omni or Magnum jaws.
2. Lash onto the hook shank and wrap backward toward the hook point. Select a small bunch of long bucktail, cut the butt ends square and tie the bucktail in on top of the hook shank.

3. Select 3-5 long light colored saddles. Tie them in around the bucktail at 3:00 and 9:00, 2:00 and 10:00, and one at 12:00 (3:00, 9:00, and 12:00 if only using 3).
4. Select another long saddle of a slightly darker or contrasting color and tie it in at the 12:00 position on top of the last saddle tied in.

5. On top of the saddles, tie in a dozen or so strands of flashabou. Next, tie in the body materials beginning with the copper wire first, a single schlappen feather (tied in by the tips, convex side up), and finally the Estaz.
6. Wrap the materials forward beginning with the Estaz. Be sure to leave about two hook eye lengths behind the eye of the hook. Fold the schlappen feather and palmer forward. Reverse wrap the wire forward to secure the body.

7. Select another small bunch of bucktail and cut the butt ends square. Tie the hairs in all the way around the hook shank so that they extend forward beyond the eye. Trim the butt ends close to the thread and wrap over the butt ends making a clean and neat tie in point.
8. Push the bucktail backward toward the hook point and pull the thread through the bucktail toward the eye. Wrap a thread dam ahead (not on top of) the bucktail. The bucktail should have a flared cone shape to it if done properly.

9. Repeat steps 7 and 8 with a slightly darker or contrasting shade of bucktail. Make a neat head and whip finish. Finish head with Zap-A-Gap or similar quick drying lacquer.
10. Before removing the hook from the jaws, insert the open end of the Articulated Shank through the eye of the SC15.

11. Remove the hook from the vise and insert the shank into the jaws. Wrap over the open end of the shank to lock the hook in, then bring the thread to the center of the shank. Attach the lead eye to the underside of the shank (if you want a weighted fly).
12. Dub a small ball of a brightly colored synthetic dubbing at the rear of the shank.

13. Repeat the steps for building the body on the rear portion of the fly (steps 5 and 6, no flashabou here though). You will need more space from the front of this collar to the eye than you did on the rear portion of the fly. It will be important to finish the schlappen collar just ahead of the lead eye.
14. Tie in more flashabou here as an overbody. I have used silver holographic flashabou followed by purple holographic flashabou on this fly.

15. To build bulk in the head (with minimal material), repeat steps 7 and 8 with a light colored bucktail.
16. Repeat steps 7 and 8 again with a slightly darker or contrasting shade of bucktail.

17. Finally, repeat steps 7 and 8 with a dark colored bunch of bucktail.
18. Next, prepare two flank feathers (in this case I used mallard). Tie them in on either side of the fly, leaving the stems long.

19. Select two long saddles as an under topping. Grizzly saddles are a great choice here. These saddles should be about the same length as the overall fly. Tie these in at 2:00 and 10:00 on the fly, leaving the stems long.
20. Select 2-4 long dark saddles for a topping. Tie these in at the 1:00 and 11:00 positions on the hook shank. They should extend just beyond the grizzly saddles beneath. Be sure to leave the stems long.

21. Fold all of the stems back and take a few tight wraps around them. Trim the butt ends close to the thread.
22. Lastly, prepare two jungle cock cheeks. Tie these in on the sides of the fly, leaving the stems long once again. Fold the stems back as in step 21. Make a neat head and whip finish. Use a permanent marker to color the head as needed, and finish with epoxy.

23. After the epoxy has set, submerge the fly in warm/hot water and shape the bucktail to give the fly a streamlined look. Allow to dry and you are ready to fish.