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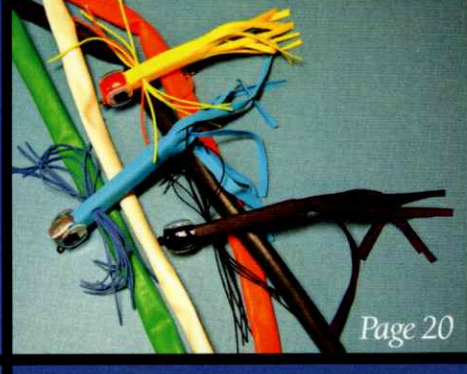
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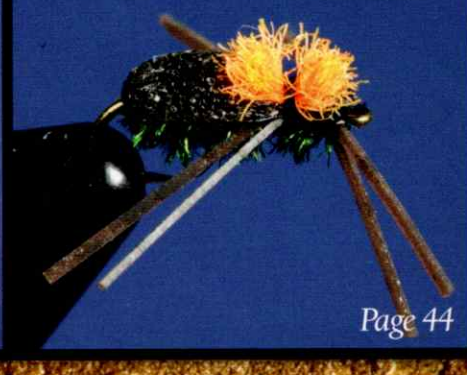
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Joe Calcavecchia: Designing Saltware Flies Anyone Can Tie

Use natural materials and these basic patterns to create flies for real-world fishing.

BY DAVID KLAUSMEYER



Joe Calcavecchia is an experienced and entertaining instructor.

I have both attended and taught a lot of fly-tying classes. I also spend several weeks each year making flies and giving presentations at fly-fishing shows. All these events are opportunities to meet *Fly Tyer* readers and discover what they like—and do not like—about this magazine.

What have I learned?

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First, you want a lot of recipes for new flies. Second, you want information about new tying materials, tools, and techniques. Third, you want to learn how to use older materials and tools—the stuff you already have on your tying bench—in new ways. And (this is very important), once you're done making the flies you find in this publication, you want to feel a tug on the end of your fly line.

Joe Calcavecchia's flies and tying methods fill all these requirements.

I met Joe, who lives in Derry, New Hampshire, when he came to my local fly-fishing club to teach a class on dressing striped bass and bluefish flies. About a dozen of us assembled that Saturday, and I quickly noticed that regardless of anyone's skill level, everyone could tie his flies. And although Joe prefers using natural feathers and furs, he will also reach for a package of flash material or synthetic hair. Finally, Joe's patterns are very fishy, and you will want to add them to your fishing kit.

He Started Out Like Most of Us

Like many of us, Joe was introduced to the craft through a fly-tying kit.

"I started tying back in my late teens—seventeen or eighteen years old," he said when we got together to talk about his fly tying. "Like a lot of guys, I got a tying kit. I don't remember the brand. But it contained a Thompson Model A vise and all the usual stuff. I started saltwater fly fishing not too long after that. I was living in Massachusetts at the time.

Did you start by tying freshwater or saltwater flies?

"I started tying flies for fishing fresh water, but my real passion has always been salt water. Once I got my driver's license, I was going down to Plum Island to fish. My whole goal was to catch those fish on a fly."

Joe must have picked up the rudiments of tying pretty quickly because before long he was supplying a local shop with his flies.

"I got into commercial fly tying because there were no flies specifically designed for catching fish around Plum Island and the area north of Boston. Very few people knew anything about saltwater fly fishing,

FLY PHOTOGRAPHY BY DAVE KLAUSMEYER

and most of the books were about fishing more in the southern states. I remember going to Hunter's, that old shop in New Hampshire, and they recommended that I tie some flies with lead eyes and see what happens. I was fishing with a Wet Cell IV level line; that's really all we had. We'd also have to make our own shooting-head systems. We didn't have all the choices in tackle and flies that we have today.

"Anyway," he continued, "I came off the beach after having a great day—I caught twenty-five or thirty fish—and went to Surfland, which is a legendary shop on Plum Island in Newbury. They asked what I was using, and I showed them. They asked if I could tie some for the store. That was my first stint as a commercial tier. That was more than twenty-five years ago."

Joe has always lived fairly close to some

Take a moment to examine the photographs of Joe's flies; this is just a sample of the patterns he sent. Right off the bat you'll see he still believes in natural ingredients.

of the best striped bass fishing in the Northeast. This proximity to the water gives him ample opportunity to test his flies.

"I can make it to the Merrimack River in about thirty-five minutes. My home waters are Joppa Flats, Sandy Point, and all those areas. I grew up in Stoneham, Massachusetts, which is about ten minutes north of Boston, but even when I was a kid, I'd travel to Newburyport to fish those waters."

Unfortunately, due to a busy schedule, now Joe rarely accepts large commercial orders. I am happy to report, however, that he still leads fly-tying classes.

"I don't tie commercially as much as I once did," he said. "I'm so booked with work and family that it's tough to find a lot of time to fill big commercial orders. Boy, I'd love to take a couple days a week to tie commercially, but I don't have the time."

"I love teaching," he continued. "It's nice to do because I couldn't find a teacher when



Joe's Dark Olive Angel

Hook: Eagle Claw 254SS, Gamakatsu SC15-2H, or an equivalent, sizes 1 to 2/0.

Thread: Monofilament.

Tail: Pearl Angel Hair mixed with pearl and silver holographic Flashabou.

Body: Bill's Bodi-Braid, pearl.

Wing: Dark olive Angel Hair attached at the head of the hook and tied down with a single strand of pearl Krystal Flash spiral-wrapped up the hook.

Throat: Red permanent marker on the body.

Eyes: 2-millimeter silver adhesive eyes.

Epoxy: 30-minute epoxy or light-activated acrylic.

Joe's Clouseiver—Chartreuse & White

Hook: Mustad 34007 or an equivalent, size 2/0.

Thread: White 3/0 (210 denier) for the body, and chartreuse 3/0 (210 denier) for the head.

Eyes: Medium silver dumbbell.

Tail: White bucktail under two white saddle hackles, two chartreuse grizzly hackles mixed with chartreuse Krystal Flash and silver holographic Flashabou.

Body: Bill's Bodi-Braid, pearl or silver, coated with head cement.

Collar: White bucktail.

Topping: Peacock herl.

Eyes: Chrome-plated dumbbell.

Throat: Red Krystal Flash.

Head: Coat the head and eyes with 30-minute epoxy or light-activated acrylic.

Joe's Epoxy White Sand Eel

Hook: Eagle Claw 254SS, Gamakatsu SC15-2H, or an equivalent, sizes 1 to 2/0.

Thread: Monofilament.

Tail: White bucktail mixed with pearl and silver holographic Flashabou.

Body: Bill's Bodi-Braid, pearl.

Wing: White bucktail attached at the front of the hook and tied down with a single strand of pearl Krystal Flash spiral-wrapped up the hook.

Throat: Red permanent marker on the body.

Eyes: 2-millimeter silver adhesive eyes.

Epoxy: 30-minute epoxy or light-activated acrylic.

Comments: Apply epoxy on the tail slightly beyond the hook bend.

Joe's Bonito Bear

Hook: Eagle Claw 254SS, Gamakatsu SC15-2H, or an equivalent, sizes 1 to 2/0.

Thread: Monofilament.

Tail: Polar bear hair mixed with silver Krystal Flash and silver holographic Flashabou.

Wing: Polar bear hair.

Flanks: Silver Mylar.

Eyes: 3-millimeter silver adhesive eyes.

Head: 30-minute epoxy or light-activated acrylic.

Joe's Epoxy Sand Eel

Hook: Eagle Claw 254SS, Gamakatsu SC15-2H, or an equivalent, sizes 1 to 2/0.

Thread: Monofilament.

Tail: White bucktail mixed with pearl and silver holographic Flashabou.

Body: Bill's Bodi-Braid, pearl.

Wing: Peacock herl attached at the head of the hook and tied down with a single strand of pearl Krystal Flash spiral-wrapped up the hook.

Throat: Red permanent marker on the body.

Head: 2-millimeter silver adhesive eyes.

Head: 30-minute epoxy or light-activated acrylic.

Comments: Apply epoxy on the tail slightly beyond the hook bend.



Joe's Epoxy Rainmaker

Hook: Eagle Claw 254SS, Gamakatsu SC15-2H, or an equivalent, sizes 1 to 2/0.

Thread: Monofilament.

Tail: White bucktail mixed with pearl and silver holographic Flashabou.

Body: Bill's Bodi-Braid, pearl.

Wing: Light olive bucktail attached at the front of the hook and tied down with a single strand of pearl Krystal Flash spiral-wrapped up the hook.

Throat: Red permanent marker on the body.

Head: 2-millimeter silver adhesive eyes.

Head: 30-minute epoxy or light-activated acrylic.

Comments: Apply epoxy on the tail slightly beyond the hook bend.



Joe's Silverside

Hook: Mustad 34007 or 34011, sizes 1 to 3/0.

Thread: White 3/0 (210 denier) for the body, and gray 6/0 (140 denier) for the head.

Tail: White bucktail under four to 12 white saddle hackles, mixed with silver Krystal Flash and silver holographic Flashabou.

Body: Silver Bill's Bodi-Braid coated with head cement.

Collar: White bucktail and pale gray bucktail on top.

Eyes: 2-millimeter adhesive eyes coated with 30-minute epoxy or light-activated acrylic.



Joe's Mummy Chub

Hook: Mustad 34007 or 34011, sizes 1 to 3/0.

Thread: White 3/0 (210 denier) for the body, and olive 6/0 (140 denier) for the head.

Tail: White bucktail, two white saddle hackles, and two olive grizzly hackles mixed with root beer Krystal Flash and gold holographic Flashabou.

Body: Pearl Bill's Bodi-Braid coated with head cement.

Collar: White and olive bucktail.

Throat: Fluorescent yellow calftail and red Krystal Flash.

Head: 3-millimeter green eyes coated with 30-minute epoxy or light-activated acrylic.

Comment: Joe's Mummy Chub is a very productive fly. Developed for fishing mud flats and backwater estuaries, with its barred feathers and yellow throat, it imitates a mummy chub.



I started out. I didn't have formal training, and I didn't get any sort of formal guidance on tying saltwater flies until I began working at American Angling Supplies, which was a shop in Salem, New Hampshire.

Thoughts on Flies and Tying

Take a moment and examine the photographs of Joe's flies; this is just a sample of the patterns he sent. Right off the bat you'll see he still believes in natural ingredients.

"I started out using and still love natural materials. I tried using synthetic materials, especially some of the stiffer hairs, but I didn't catch as many fish with those flies. I'd be casting to a school of fish with a Clouser-type fly, and catch one fish after another. Then, I would switch to a fly tied using plastics and I'd get nothing. A lot of natural materials have more action in the water; Ultra Hair and some of the stiffer hairs just don't have the same swimming action."

Of course, it is rare to use only one type of material, and Joe occasionally does use some varieties of soft synthetic hair.

"I do like Angel Hair and similar softer materials," he said. "I also use Big Body Fibers to tie large bunker imitations. That material is actually better than schlappen feathers for making the bigger patterns."

Joe also coats some of the heads and bodies of his patterns with either epoxy or one of the new light-cured acrylic finishes. I asked him for some tips when making these patterns.

"It's very important with epoxy flies to stay away from that paintbrush appearance where the tail fibers splay out from a narrower body. A lot of times, when people start making epoxy flies, they tie a bunch of material to the hook and then apply the epoxy to only the shank. The problem is that their flies don't have a naturally tapered appearance. I apply a small amount of epoxy to the tail material beyond the end of the hook so the head and tail maintain about the same diameter and appear even."

Joe has met a lot of notable tiers over the years. Sometimes these encounters encourage him to tie new flies.

"I got the idea for my Stripper Dragons from the great Bill Catherwood; he tied a lot of those style of flies. I met Bill at Surfland. I didn't know who he was, and

I showed him my flies. He showed me some of his flies, and I said, 'Wow, those are nice.' We talked for a couple of minutes, and then I went down to the beach. It was wall-to-wall fish—the stripers were everywhere. The next thing I know, Bill comes down the beach—he was in his seventies at the time. He didn't have a rod with him, and he said the fishing looked great. I offered him my rod, and he said, 'You're in the middle of a blitz, and you're giving me your rod?' He was tickled pink, and we became friends."

Before we concluded our conversa-

I asked Joe to share a couple of tips... Everything he offered had to do with selecting and using the correct thread.

tion, I asked Joe, who has taught many people how to tie, to share a couple of tips that might help a novice get started making saltwater patterns. Everything he offered had to do with selecting and using the correct thread.

"Don't use a thread that is too light; a good, strong size 3/0 thread works much better. And although I do use monofilament thread on some of my flies, white thread does a better job of hiding mistakes; use white thread when tying the bodies on your flies. And be sure to always wrap a layer of thread on the hook shank before tying on any materials; this helps hold everything tightly in place. And finally, it really helps to learn how to do a whip-finish knot."

Why do you read this magazine: to discover new flies, gather some fresh ideas about using materials, or find patterns that will help you catch more fish? Joe Calcavecchia's family of flies answers all these desires.

David Klausmeyer is the editor of this magazine. His newest book is titled *The Orvis Guide to Fly Tying for Absolute Beginners* (Skyhorse Publishing).

To learn more about Joe Calcavecchia's patterns, go to his website, www.customsaltwaterflies.com.



Joe's Peach MoJo Squid

Hook: Mustad 34007 or 34011, sizes 1 to 3/0.
Thread: White 3/0 (210 denier) for the body, and orange 6/0 (140 denier) for the head.
Tail: Four peach saddle hackles (make dots on the feathers using a black permanent marker) mixed with purple Krystal Flash in the middle of the tail and pearl Krystal Flash on the outside.
Body: Peach Estaz.
Eyes: 6- to 10-millimeter eyes glued above the hook gap.
Collar: Peach bucktail or peach marabou.
Head: Pink thread coated with 30-minute epoxy or light-activated acrylic.



Joe's Clousceiver—Olive

Hook: Mustad 34007, size 2/0.
Thread: White 3/0 (210 denier) for the body, and olive 6/0 (140 denier) for the head.
Tail: White bucktail, two white saddle hackles, two olive grizzly hackles mixed with root beer Krystal Flash and gold holographic Flashabou.
Body: Pearl or silver Bill's Bodi-Braid coated with head cement.
Collar: White bucktail.
Wing: Olive bucktail.
Topping: Peacock herl.
Eyes: Chrome dumbbell.
Throat: Red Krystal Flash.
Head: Coat the head with 30-minute epoxy or light-activated acrylic.



Joe's Big Body Fiber Bunker—Olive

Hook: Eagle Claw 254SS, Gamakatsu SC15-2H, or an equivalent, size 4/0 or 6/0.
Thread: White 3/0 (210 denier).
Tail: White bucktail and white Big Body Fibers (or EP Fibers) mixed with silver Krystal Flash and pearl Flashabou.
Body and wing: White bucktail to the head of the hook.
Collar: White and olive bucktail topped with peacock herl.
Throat: Red Krystal Flash or calftail.
Head: Olive 3/0 (210 denier) thread coated with 30-minute epoxy or light-activated acrylic.
Eyes: 6- to 10-millimeter silver adhesive eyes.



Joe's Striper Dragon—Chartreuese and White

Hook: Eagle Claw 254SS, Gamakatsu SC15-2H, or an equivalent, size 3/0.
Thread: White 3/0 (210 denier).
Tail: White bucktail, four white saddle hackles, and two chartreuse grizzly saddle hackles mixed with pearl Krystal Flash and silver holographic Flashabou.
Collar: White bucktail.
Head: White deer hair, spun and clipped into a bullet-shaped head.
Eyes: 6-millimeter 3-D eyes glued to the sides of the head.