

Fly of the Month

By Mike Ott

White Marabou Mini-jig

When in Rome...

One of the things I really love about fly fishing is that it is a constant learning experience. Over the past forty years this sport has evolved so much it becomes overwhelming at times – advances in rod and line technology, advances in entomology, fly tying materials, and techniques, advances in communication and educational exchanges, etc. Yet somehow, the traditions remain. It all boils down to fly, fish, water, and presentation. Sometimes it takes a return to the basics to remind us it is still just fishing.



On a recent trip to south Missouri, we were reminded of just that. One of us fished “real flies” while the other fished a “baitfish imitation”. One of us hammered fish all day – including a truly impressive Ozark smallmouth, while the other caught a respectable number of fish while fishing the way he wanted. Needless to say, the “baitfish imitation” won this battle of wills. I did eventually relent and change over to a “baitfish imitation” just to catch up. That miraculous “baitfish imitation” was a marabou jig.

A good old fashioned jig is a very effective imitator of a minnow, a crawfish, or whatever. At the guide’s suggestion, I have gladly fished Purple Haze dry flies, Bighorn Pink scuds, Pink Squirrel nymphs, and bright pink hoppers all with great success so why not a marabou jig. I will gladly take the ridicule as long as it comes with catching fish. Lesson number one – listen to your guide. You are paying for an education not just a boat ride. Lesson number two – don’t forget the basics. Keep it simple. Lesson number three – don’t argue with success. The fish is always right.

When tying jigs, remember to choose quality jig heads. There are a lot of cheap jig heads with cheap hooks out there. The heat process of making jig heads tends to compromise the hook, so spend the money on good hooks. Jig heads come in a wide range of sizes from 1/100th up to saltwater sizes. Also choose nice fluffy marabou with good true colors. Remember, too, that when tying layered colors, the lighter color goes on the back because the jig rides hook up. Keep your thread wraps tight and compact for neater looking jigs. Try white and gray, white and ginger, and white and olive.