

Tying the

Whitlock SHEEP MINNOW S E R I E S

*A baitfish pattern that can be tied
to imitate any baitfish that
swims at any depth*

DAVE WHITLOCK



Swimmer Sheep Minnows (above), Waker Sheep Minnows (below).



BEFORE SITTING DOWN TO TIE Sheep Minnows, get a live minnow or a photo of the minnow you want to imitate. This will help you create a minnow of the correct color, length, width, and proportions. It pays also to learn about the habits of the minnows you plan to imitate.

I use a hook with a shank that is at least 4X-long because it provides consistent hooking efficiency on up-hook swimming streamers. With smaller (shorter shank) hooks, the fly's head and back material can create a dodger-like effect that prevents the hook and point from penetrating the fish's mouth. The farther back the point is from the head and the more up-angle the hook point are, the more effectively this fly hooks fish.

For the best possible hooking when a fish takes your fly, begin your strike with a deliberate, smooth line strip until you feel the fish, then make two or three fast hook sets with the rod.

I tip each body material's butt end with a micro amount of Zap-A-Gap before I tie it to the hook, and I use only three or four wraps of 8/0 tying thread to secure the material. This keeps the nose small and neat.

The tying steps that follow are for the Swimming Sheep Minnow, but you can

RECIPE

SWIMMING SHEEP MINNOW

HOOK: TMC 9394 nickel-plated #2-#8 or TMC 911S stainless-steel, 4X-long, ringed eye, #4 to #4/0.

THREAD: Nylon 8/0-3/0, the color of minnow's body.

BODY WEIGHT: Lead wire or non-corrosion resistant zinc wire.

CEMENTS: Dave's Flexament, Zap-A-Gap, and Goop.

GILLS: Dave Whitlock-plus-SLF Dubbing: color #24 Whitlock's minnow gills.

BODY FLASH: Krystal Flash (color of body).

BODY HAIR: Icelandic Sheep Hair (colors of minnow body).


LATERAL LINE: Two strips of pearl Saltwater Flashabou and two hackles (color of minnow's upper side).

CHEEK: Pair of feathers to form shape and color of right and left sides of minnow's head.

EYES: Pair of Waspi solid plastic doll eyes or Holographic eyes.

use them as a starting point for tying the Waker Sheep Minnow and the Deep Sheep Minnow.

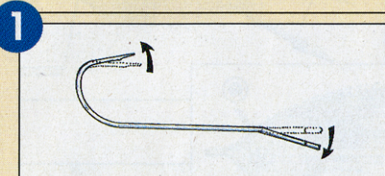
The Waker Sheep Minnow has the same design as the Swimming Sheep Minnow except it is tied on a TMC 8089 nickel-plated, wide-gape, down-swimming hook. Up-swimming hooks for surface flies are poor hookers. Tie the floating head on the front 1/3 of the hook using deer hair and hollow plastic doll eyes. Trim the head to the size and shape needed to imitate the surface swimming action of the minnow of choice.

The Deep Sheep Minnow is tied almost identically to the Swimming Sheep except that instead of having a few turns of lead wire, it has a pair of metal barbell eyes on the lower side of the hook shank where you create the bend in Step1. Attach the eyes with figure-eight wraps and coat wraps with Zap-A-Gap. I paint the eyes and proceed with tying the minnow as described for the Swimmer. Choose the size and density of eyes to give you the sink rate you desire. Overcoat the eyes with five-minute Epoxy or Clear Wapsi Epoxy paint. 

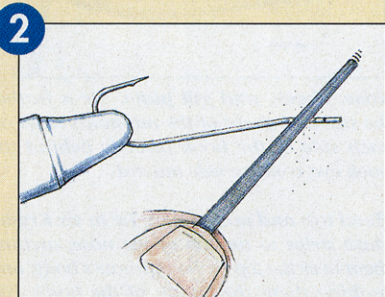
DAVE WHITLOCK is a FLY FISHERMAN Editor-at-Large.

SWIMMING SHEEP MINNOW STEPS

BEND-BACK HOOK PREP

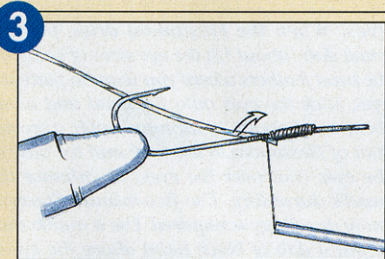


With pliers, bend the hook shank down about 1½ eye lengths behind the eye. Bend the hook's spear up about 5 percent.

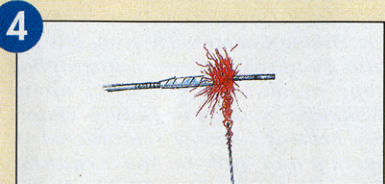


With a file, roughen the hook shank in the area of the bend so thread, materials, and cement can adhere more securely to shank. Coat the roughened area with Zap-A-Gap. Tightly wrap the tying thread over this section of the hook shank.

BODY



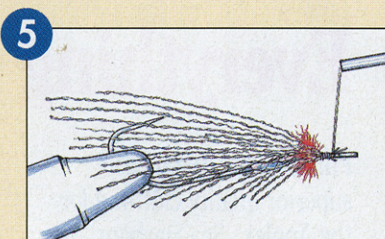
Weight. Put ten turns of weighting wire (about the diameter of the hook wire or smaller) around the hook immediately behind the bend at the hook eye. This balances the hook for correct swim and sink angles. After you tie and test your first fly, you may want to add or subtract wraps to balance your next flies. If lead is used, wrap a bit of silver-pearl Mylar tinsel over it to conceal its out-line in the body.



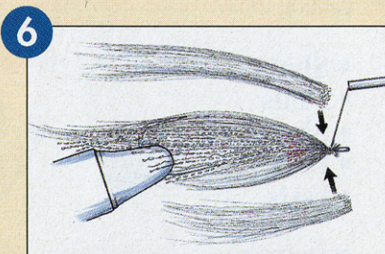
Gills. Wrap a small ball of red dubbing around the hook just in front of the weighting wraps.

FLY TIER'S BENCH . . .

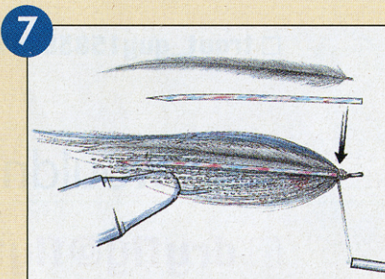
Continued from page 63



Underbody flash. Tie 10 to 20 strands of Krystal Flash to the top and bottom of the hook. Make the top strands extend back 1½ times the hook shank length, and the lower strands extend just to the hook bend.



Sheep hair. Just behind the hook eye, tie sheep hair on the top and bottom of the hook to form the belly and mid-section of the minnow's sides. Keep the hair sparse.

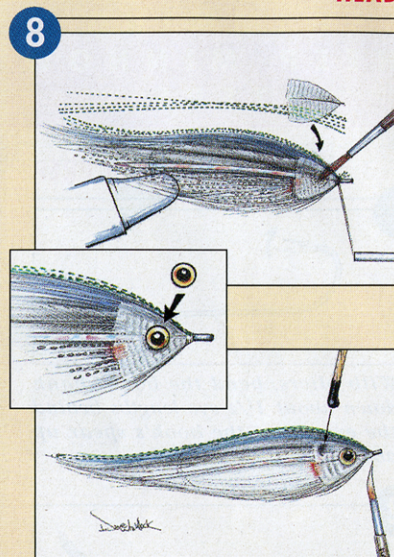


Back. Tie in sheep hair to imitate the minnow's upper back shape and color. Let it extend back past the hook bend ½ to ¾ the length of the shank.

Side flash (lateral line). Tie a straight strip of Saltwater Flashabou Mylar on the right and left sides of the minnow at approximately where the minnow's lateral line would be. Cut the Mylar about ¾ length of the sheep body hair.

Lateral line and back feathers. Tie a backle to the right and left sides of the head to form the minnow's upper side and back shape and markings (stripes, bars, etc.).

HEAD



Nose, cheek, and gill plate. Tie a feather the size and shape of the minnow's head on each side of the hook directly behind the hook eye, concave side inward.

Head top and nose color. Tie in six Krystal Flash strips to the top of the nose, arching them over the top of the minnow's body, and making them the length of the body. Use ostrich or peacock herl if you prefer. Whip-finish the nose.

Paint. Apply a thin coat of Dave's Flexament to the nose wraps and place a drop on each head feather to strengthen it and prime each cheek for eye placement and gluing.

Eyes. When the Flexament dries, place a small dab (about ⅓ the eye size) of Goop on the head feathers where you want to place the eyes. Stick the eyes onto the head and allow them to set about 30 minutes. Apply a second coat of Flexament to the nose and the base of the eyes (not over the eyes) to enhance the head's durability. Use five-minute Epoxy if more durability is required. Use a match stick to put a dab of black paint above the eye to imitate shad's gill spot.

