

Chuck Caddis

by Jim Riccardi

If you fish the trout waters of New England and are familiar with the insects that trout call food, then you know that the caddis fly is a prolific resident as well as a favorite meal. Caddis flies are a down winged aquatic insect that resembles a small moth at rest. They are present in most if not all of our trout waters and their hatch schedule is much more regular than the mayfly, which is often thought to be the favorite of trout.



Anglers that are in the know about the caddis fly will no doubt be carrying a selection of Elk Hair Caddis with them. This is probably the most popular caddis imitation today but there are several other patterns that have done well for me and one of them is the Chuck Caddis.

I'm not sure of the origin of the Chuck Caddis but I do believe it came from the Northeast, possibly from the Catskill region of New York State. What I am sure of is that anglers should try it wherever trout are found.

The Chuck Caddis gets its name from the woodchuck hair that is used as a wing on the fly. Woodchuck hair is an underused material most likely because it is sparse on the hide and takes some finesse to gather up a bunch to tie a fly with. On the positive side it dries quickly when wet, a desirable feature for a dry fly material and tends to be stiff which aids in flotation. The coloration of woodchuck hair matches very well with the wings of the natural insect.

Where I have found the Chuck Caddis to be especially useful is in a situation where the fish have seen a lot of pressure and a lot of flies. After having an army of imitations dropped on their heads trout may respond to something a bit different that better mimics the colors of the natural insect. Here is the pattern.

HOOK: Mustad #94840 or equivalent dry fly hook. Sizes 12 to 16.

THREAD: Tan or brown.

BODY: Synthetic dubbing or any dubbing that is suitable for dry flies. It seems to be popular with a dirty orange body but tan, olive, yellow or light gray are good choices.

WING: Woodchuck guard hair.

HACKLE: Mixed brown and grizzly dry fly hackle. This is wrapped in front of the wing.

I suggest that you tie in the woodchuck hair securely as it is a bit slippery and may pull out easily. The mixed brown and grizzly hackle gives a buggy quality to the fly and has proven an effective combination on many dry flies.

Editor's note: Tie this fly on a size 10 or 12 hook with a body of peacock herl or dark-brown dubbing to imitate the Alder Fly (zebra caddis) that emerges in late June on the upper Androscoggin River.