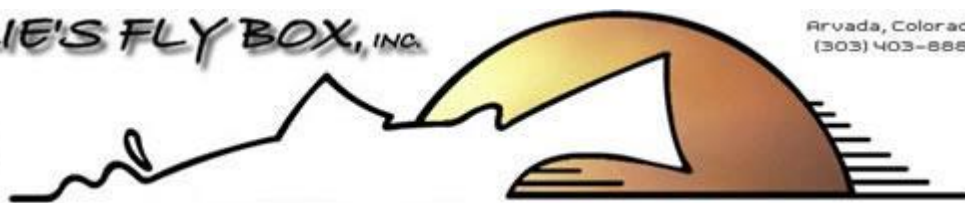


CHARLIE'S FLY BOX, INC.



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Chuck's Caddis Variant



Fly Patterns brought to you by Charlie's FlyBox

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Charlie Craven and Charlie's FlyBox, Inc.

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step: 1

Pattern Description

Chuck Stranahan came up with his Caddis Variant (CV) pattern way back in the sixties. He developed the fly for steelhead in the Sacramento River in California. I wonder if he knows how well this pattern has performed all the way out here in Colorado? Roaring Fork Valley guide, Dustin Harcourt, introduced me to this great pattern several years ago. A good friend and I had booked a day through Roaring Fork Anglers for a float trip down the Roaring Fork and Colorado. Drew Reid, the manager of RFA, also happens to be an old friend and he set us up with Dustin. As it turned out, Dustin went to high school with my wife, hung out with my high school girlfriends' cousins and we both knew many of the same folks. We hit it off immediately. I have since been on several floats with Dustin and can confidently say he may be one of the very best float guides in the Valley. But I digress& Drew had warned me that the CV was Dustin's favorite fly, so I had tied up my idea of the pattern from the description that Drew provided. My version

Materials Needed:

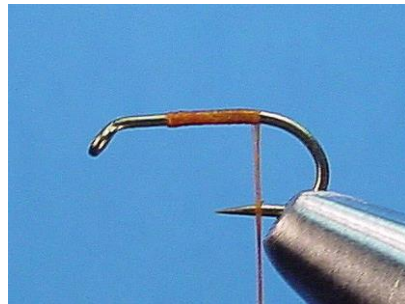
Hook: TMC 921 #12-16 The 921 is a short, stout dry fly hook, required for this type of pattern.
Thread: 8/0 Rusty Brown
Body: Antron Dubbing, Rust Wing: Fine Natural Deer Hair
Overwing: White Calf Body Hair
Hackle: Grizzly Dyed Golden Ginger oversized to two gap widths.

was much more like a common Fluttering Caddis, adhering to standard fly proportions and silhouettes. Once we started the float, Dustin attached a CV to my buddies tippet and he proceeded to start ripping fish. I'm not the smartest guy in the world but it didn't take me long to make the switch myself. The only problem was that my version didn't work. Not, didn't work as well, it didn't work at all. I snatched Dustin's fly box and peeked at the CVs in it. They were much different than the pattern I had tied. The bodies were shorter and stouter, the wings were much more sparse and the hackle was tremendously oversized. To top all this off, it was tied on a strange new hook that I had never seen before. I swallowed my pride and begged a few from Dustin (as a, often broken, rule, I DO NOT use flies I haven't tied myself). The new fly proceeded to pull fish up consistently. I had even fished it on a dropper behind an Elk Hair Caddis and got exactly zero eats on the Elk Hair while the CV was constantly under attack. Like I said, I'm not the sharpest, but the Caddis Variant quickly became a favorite pattern that day. This is truly one of those flies that simply have something different. I have analyzed this pattern for several years and think I may finally have come up with an answer as to why this fly works so well. The profile presented by this fly is almost an exact match for a real caddis. The natural has the same type of short, stubby body, its wings are, generally, tightly folded over the back of the body and the gangly legs are in constant motion. The triggers this pattern provides make it a sure thing on many waters. I think we have all been snow balled by popular patterns like the Elk Hair Caddis. Not that the Elk Hair isn't an outstanding pattern, but there are times, especially these days on more pressured water, where a slightly more realistic pattern really makes a difference. The most common angler perception of a caddis is that of a wide, moth-like critter that bounces up and down on the water. In reality, a caddis fly, when viewed from the bottom (the fishes' view), has a much shorter body than wing and a dramatically thinner wing silhouette than is commonly perceived. The oversized variant hackle of the CV sets the front of the pattern up on the surface forcing the deer hair wing tips down to create a streaking impression on the surface of the water as the pattern is twitched and skated. Mike Lawson's fantastic new book, Spring Creeks, has an outstanding bottom view photo of a natural caddis that really reinforces this idea. I use this pattern as an example of a fresh look at an old perception. Keep this in mind as you design and tie some of your own stuff. The CV does present a few tying challenges. The stacked, hi-viz wing creates a lot

of bulk on the front of the hook creating a tapered base for the hackle. Conventionally wrapping hackle over this tapered base leads to the wraps falling forward down the base. I present an alternative method here that will alleviate this problem and create a secure tie down and wrap area. Pay close attention to the thread positioning prior to wrapping the hackles. The body is formed from a twisted antron rope, unlike many conventional patterns. The rope creates a robust, segmented body that is more in proportion to the naturals wing length than most traditional patterns. Be absolutely certain to tie some Caddis Variants up for your box. This is one pattern I don't go fishing without!

step: 2

Attach thread at sixty percent point on the hook and wrap a thread base back to the bend.



step: 3

Pull a clump of antron dubbing from the package and align the fibers in a lengthwise fashion.



step: 4

Apply a bit of dubbing wax to the thumb and forefinger of both hands. Grasp the dubbing at either end and twist it into a cord. Work your fingers over the length of the dubbing twisting as you go. This is performed just like twisting the dubbing onto the thread, but you have to hold on to one end of the dubbing clump as you twist to force it into a cord.



step: 5

Tie the antron rope to the shank at the mid-point on the hook. Wrap back over the rope to the bend of the hook. Clip the stub of antron from the front end of the tie down area.



step: 6

Pull the antron rope up above the hook and roll it in your fingertips to twist it up tight.



step: 7

Wrap the rope around the shank in even concentric turns up to the mid-point on the shank and tie it off there. You may need to add some additional twist as you wrap.



step: 8

Clip the remaining antron rope from the shank at the front edge of the body. Form a thread base from the front edge of the body to the eye of the hook and back again.



step: 9

Cut, clean and stack a sparse clump of deer hair. Measure the hair against the shank so it is equal to about one and a half shank lengths.



step: 10

Tie the deer hair in at the front edge of the body with a tight, narrow band of thread. Keep the wing on top of the hook as you tie it in.



step: 11

Cut the butt ends of the deer hair as close to the hook as possible and build a smooth thread base over the butts. Take care not to create too much bulk on the shank as you do this. Bring the thread back to the base of the wing and let it hang there in preparation for the next step.



step: 12

Cut, clean and stack an even sparser clump of calf body hair. This clump is, literally, about twenty individual fibers.



step: 13

Measure the calf hair against the deer hair wing so it is the same length and tie it in at the base of the wing with another narrow band of thread.



step: 14

Cut the butt ends of the calf hair flush to the shank and build a smooth thread base over the stubs.



step: 15

Measure two hackle feathers against the gap of the hook. The fibers should be equal to two hook gap widths. Prepare the hackle feathers by stripping their butts, exposing the bare quill for a length of about two eye lengths. Tie the hackles in by their butt ends, with the insides of the feathers facing the hook, at the base of the wing and wrap forward over the butt ends of the quills to secure them. Return the thread to the base of the wing, in front of the hackle feathers.



step: 16

Leave the thread hanging at the base of the wing and grasp both hackle feathers in your fingertips. Wrap the feathers forward in tight concentric turns, pushing the thread forward as you wrap by making each turn of hackle behind the hanging thread. The hanging thread will keep tension on the feathers and prevent them from sliding down the sloped thread base to the eye. If you were to try and wrap the feathers with the thread hanging at the index point, the hackle would fall down



the steep edge of the thread base and wreak havoc. This is a great little trick to use on any type of down wing fly.

step: 17

Tie the hackles off at the rear edge of the index point and clip the excess tips.



step: 18

Build a smooth thread head and whip finish behind the eye.



step: 19

Finished Fly, quartering front view



step: 20

Finished fly, side view. Notice the segmentation of the body, the length and sparseness of the wing and the oversized hackle. Also note the hackle/body proportions.



step: 21

Finished fly, bottom view. The hackle is VERY wide, the body VERY thin and short and the wing is VERY sparse and narrow.

