

Serendipity

The Serendipity is a must-have pattern on many Montana rivers, the Madison in particular. Depending on how it's tied and how it's fished, it can imitate a midge, a caddis, or even a small mayfly emerger. There's a huge number variations on the basic Serendipity theme, with beads appearing and disappearing, body materials being altered, and hook sizes from #8 all the way down to #24 being used. Even the scud hook and flared hair wing, the most common elements of the fly, have been dispensed with at times. The version given here works well to imitate caddisflies that form tan/brown cases, but it should be treated only as a guide.

How to Fish

The Serendipity is usually fished on a dead drift, but this can happen anywhere from right in the surface film, if you're imitating a midge pupa, all the way down to the rocks, if you're imitating a dislodged cased caddis. Since it's a compact fly with a beadhead, the version here sinks quickly and should therefore be fished tight to the bottom.

Tying Challenges

The Serendipity is easy to tie unless you're tying midges in the #20-24 range. As noted above, there are many variants of the fly, so perhaps the biggest challenge in tying the fly is picking which versions you like the best and sticking to them. I like to experiment as much as most tyers, but experimentation needs to be reined in when it leads to a Serendipity box with a hundred flies in it, all different from one another.

Serendipity Pattern

Hook: heavy wire scud hook, #12-16.

Bead: gold, 1/8-3/32 inch.

Thread: tan 6/0.

Body: tan Midge Diamond Braid twisted into a rope and wound forward.

Wing: bleached elk hair flared and trimmed to a fan shape just behind the bead.

