



MATERIALS:

HOOK: Daiichi 2220, size 4

THREAD: Red UNI 6/0

EYES: Red dumbbell, large or small

TAIL: 8 strands hot orange Krystal Flash on both sides of the shank; next, rusty brown marabou blood quill, then a burnt orange marabou blood quill

BODY: Medium hot orange Cactus Chenille

LEGS: Orange/gold flake Barred Crazy Legs, 3 on each side

COLLAR: Rusty brown blood quill, 4-6 turns, tied in by the tip

Total length 3"

Soft Daddy

If you think of trout when you hear about Connecticut's Housatonic River, you're missing the boat ...

a BIG boat. Who says? Let me tell you. **BY TONY LOLLI**

Steve Culton, from Connecticut, is a guide, outdoor writer, speaker, and fly tyer. His webpage, currentseams.com, has information that goes back to the Dark Ages. Well, 2013, if not the Dark Ages. But, I digress.

Here's some more about this "boat" you're missing. The upper Housatonic River is reminiscent of larger western rivers: it is wide and shallow yet sprinkled with larger over-your-head-deep pools, riffles, and pockets. Its warm, run-of-river summer flows and rocky structure make it a smallmouth bass paradise.

Steve developed the Soft Daddy for smallmouth bass. More specifically, he developed it to imitate the rusty crayfish that infest the Housatonic River. He says you can see rusty crayfish, 1 to 3 inches long, everywhere in the shallows. The prime time for catching Housy smallmouth is June through September. The fly will work anywhere rusty crayfish are the main forage.


He said, "We know two things: there are a ton of rusty crayfish in the river, and smallmouth

love crayfish. Most of the crustacean patterns I see for fresh or salt water attempt to duplicate the bait they're supposed to represent in great detail. Crayfish patterns are no exception, from case backs to claws to even mandibles. Since I am a fan of impressionism, I wanted a pattern that created the illusion of life and movement without getting bogged down in details that smallmouth likely care little about. What's more, when crayfish flee, they do so in lightning-fast, darting movements. Their legs and claws aren't sticking out in some static position; they get tucked in to create a more efficient, streamlined shape. Since crayfish flee backward, the elements of this fly move in harmony when bounced or stripped. The eyes are not intended to function as a visual bite trigger; instead, they exist to give the pattern some weight and to initiate a jiggling action, much like a crayfish fleeing along the bottom."

The Soft Daddy takes its name from the fact that it's a soft hackle and a crawdad pattern. It's

quite simple to tie and it works because it looks like it's alive. Due to its soft hackle, it moves in the current even when at rest.

Steve noted, "Every once in a while, the stars align and the guide (me) looks like a genius. I don't fish with clients except when I'm doing a demo. I was giving a smallmouth lesson on the Housatonic, and the fish just weren't cooperating. I then demonstrated how to do the 'hop and drop' technique—I made a cast, let the fly sink, and began hopping it along the bottom when the fly got snagged on a rock. I was just explaining to my client that this was a good thing because it told us the fly was getting deep enough—and then the bottom began to fight back. It was our biggest smallmouth of the day!"

Next month: Nature or nurture? Why most guides are charlatans. 

If you're a guide with an innovative fly to share, contact Tony at tonyloлли@yahoo.com.