

Creating Extended Bodies

Do you know the old saying “no good deed goes unpunished?” Well, this became a reality recently on a trip to New Zealand. I gave a friend who does not tie flies, a Christmas gift certificate for 24 trout flies of his choosing. On my last trip to New Zealand before COVID, while fishing the Matura River, I had given him a couple size 18 extended body mayflies. (I seldom use extended body flies; but I thought it made my dry selection look impressive.) You’ve probably guessed what he wanted- extended body mayflies. Now, I had to remember what I had given him. And, I did not have the correct hooks to tie the fly he wanted. So, we compromised. I would tie several different types of extended body mayfly and he would pick which style he wanted.

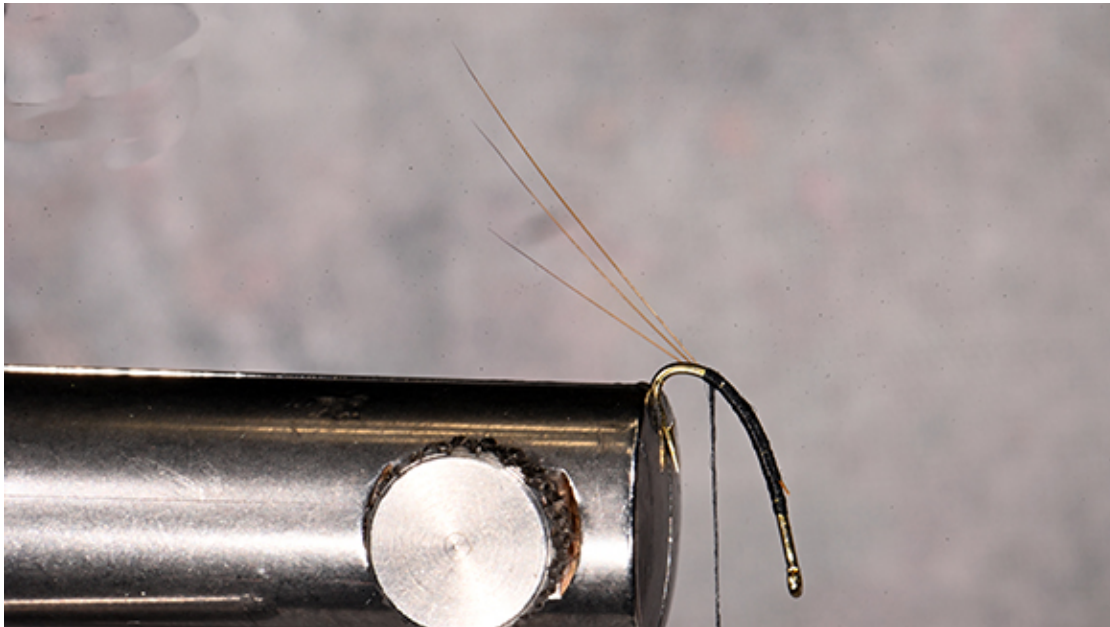
When it comes to tying size 10-14 extended body flies you have many options: using foam, hollow hair, or commercially made offerings. When tying small flies, your choices are limited. In this article, I will show the methods I found to be most effective. There are other options out there. The advantage to the methods I will describe is that with practice you can easily tie a half a dozen flies in less than an hour.

Let’s begin with looking at the easiest methods, getting a hook which you can utilize to tie an extended body mayfly.



The larger center hook is a TMC 900BL size 12, starting in the left upper corner is a size 20 R200 style, the upper right corner is a hook I bought from England about 30 years ago. I bought about 300 and I am down to the last 25. At the bottom right corner is a TMC 2487 size 18.

With the R200 style hook, utilizing the long curve you can tie a quick “faux” extended body mayfly which looks great and catches fish. Put on a tail, 2-3 fibers of your favorite tail material, here I am using “microfibetts”. Wrap the thread well past the bend of the hook until you are satisfied with the position of the tail. Once this is complete, reposition the hook in the vise such that the point is facing up. After this, complete the body, adding wings plus hackle, and you are done. Since I am covering several different methods, I opted not to do a “Step By Step” for each method. I am just trying to show you options that are available for tying small flies.



These sit on the water very, very nicely!

The next method will utilize “the hook I got from England”. This by far is the easiest and always produces great looking fly. It is up to your imagination on how simple to how complex of a mayfly to tie on these hooks. I opt for simple and easy.



This was the style my friend wanted me to tie!

The next few methods are a little tricky, but with a little practice, they are easily master. The first method utilizes just a hackle feather. You can use any hackle, but I find working with hen hackles easiest. There is a little prep work. In the picture below, I am showing how to prep a hen hackle.



Step 1: Select a hen hackle, the trick here is to get tail fibers to the desired length. Typically, tails are 1-to 1 ½ the body length. (Hint: You can use any type of feather. Some work better than others. Duck breast feathers are great for small flies; they have a nice curve in the stem; they have small fibers; and they can be dyed to almost any color.)

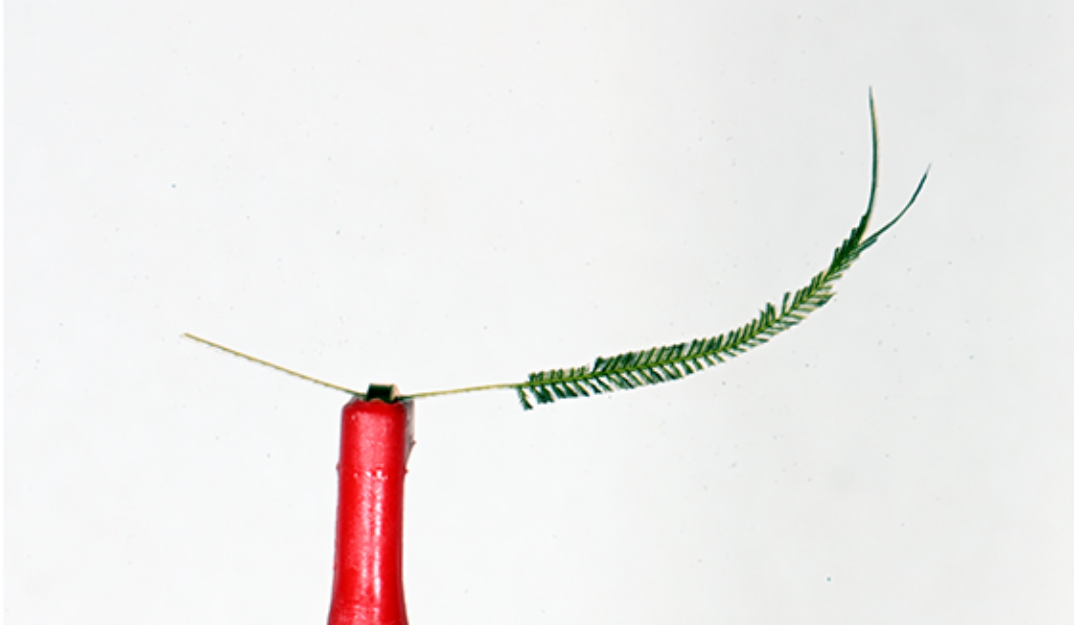
Step 2: Strip the excess material from the stem of the hackle.

Step 3: Remove the top part of the hackle by cutting the stem such that remaining hackle fibers can be used for a tail. (Hint: Leave about 2-3 fibers on each side of the hackle, in case you break one or two when handling the hackle.)

Step 4: Not including the fibers used for the tail, adjust the hackle fibers to be perpendicular to the stem.

Step 5: With a pair of scissors, trim the hackle fibers in the shape of a tapered body on the stem of the hackle. Please notice the various sizes, I am using the last two feathers on the right side of the page to tie a couple examples.

Hint: On the last feather, I used an orange thread to make a “Wally Wing” type body, for those who want a slightly fuller body. To make this type of body, just pull the hackle fibers towards the base of the hackle and simply tie it off.



Please note, natural cure of the hackle, this will aid in getting a nice profile for your mayfly



Basically, attached the extended body to the shank, set your wings and add either CDC for a hackle or a standard dry fly hackle. The wings I used were just a set of burnt wings I made. You can make this into a parachute type fly very easily, I have a friend that make these with two sets of Wally Wings, a large set and a much smaller set.



This is the same fly, just a different angle

Below are a couple of pictures of flies using a “Wally Wing” type of body.



If you look carefully, in the picture above you will see 4 tail fibers. Each side has 2 married fibers. In the next photo of the completed fly, there are only 2 tail fibers. I split each side and cut out a fiber. For 3 tail fibers trim just one.

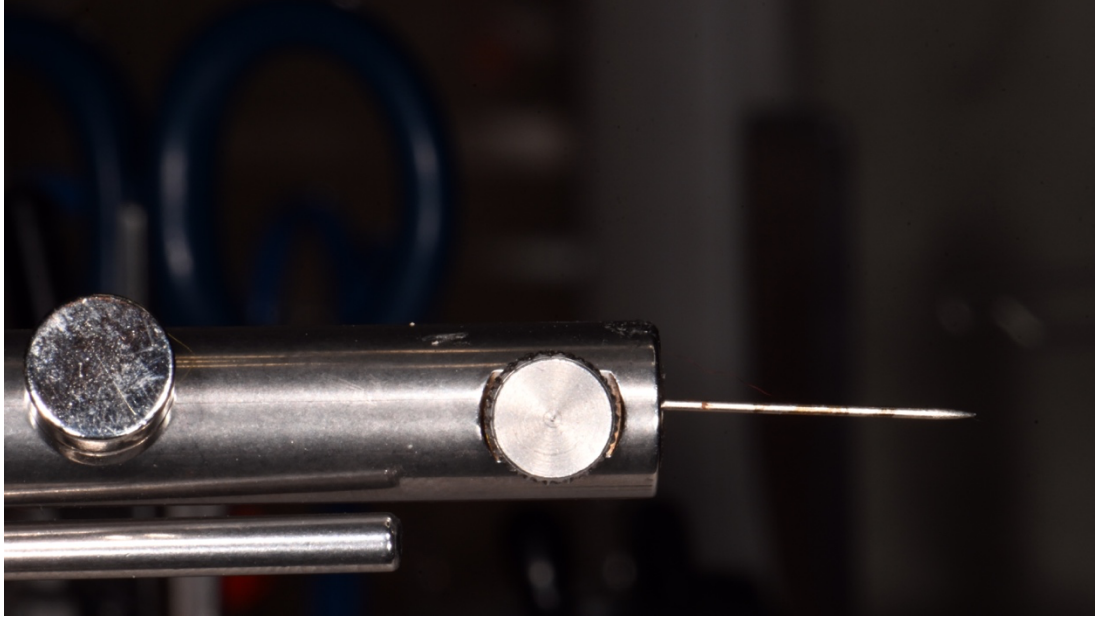


Notice the body is slightly fuller utilizing this method

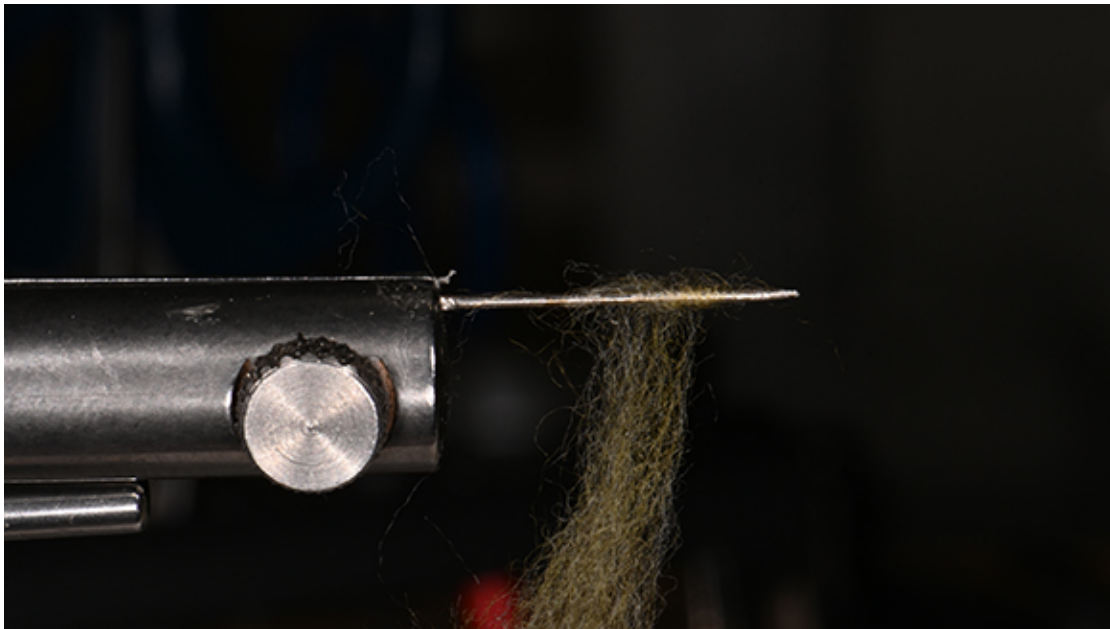
The last method is to make an extended body on a needle utilizing microfibre and Superfine Dry Fly Dubbing material. Below you will see a few pictures to get the concept across but there are two excellent YouTube videos demonstrating how to do this. Check them out:

- Extended Body Mayfly Dun by Norm Norlander
- Barry Ord Fly Tying extended mayfly body tutorial

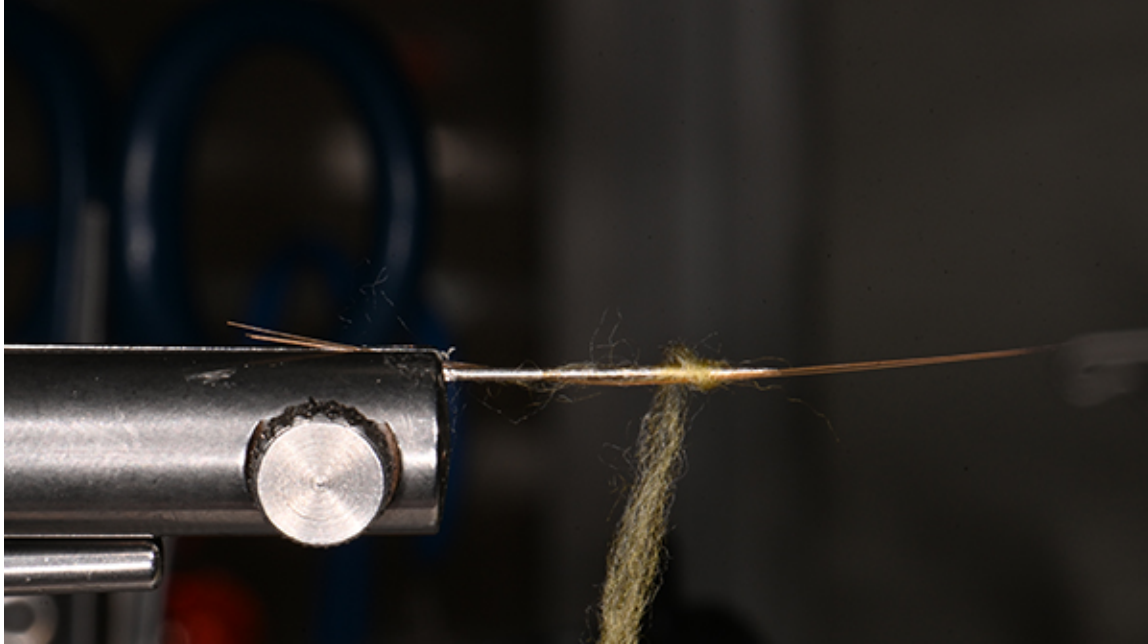
The basic premise is to make a body on a straight pin using long fiber dubbing material. Once the body is complete, coat it with a water-based cement or a silicon based fly tying sealant. Below will be an abbreviated SBS version. (Check out the YouTube videos for more information.)



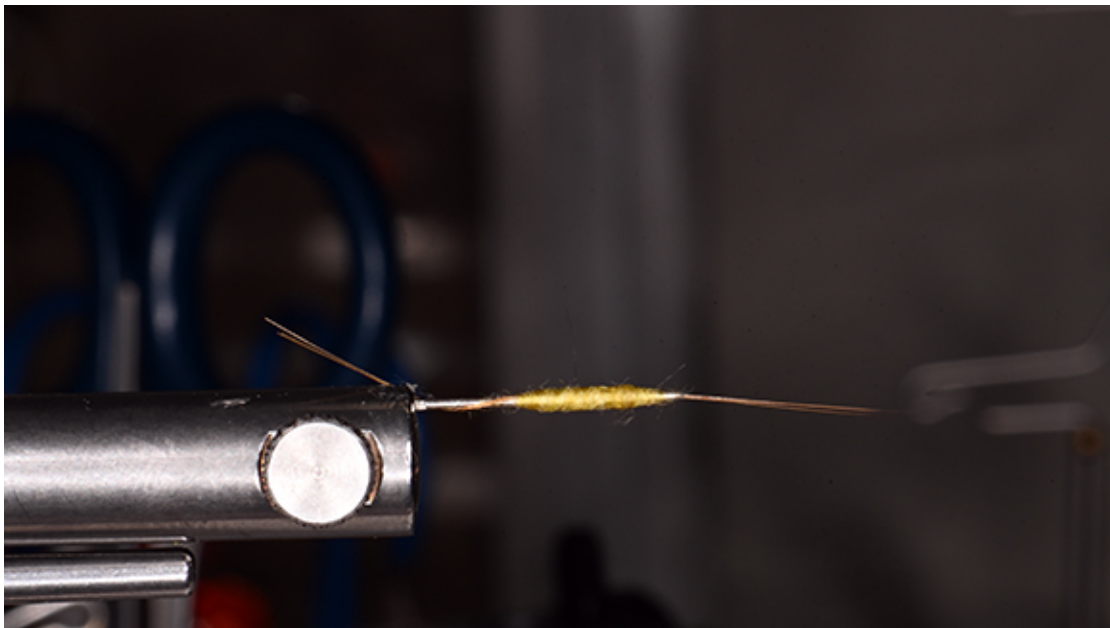
A rotary vise is essential for this method of making an extended body. I have inserted a straight pin into the vise.



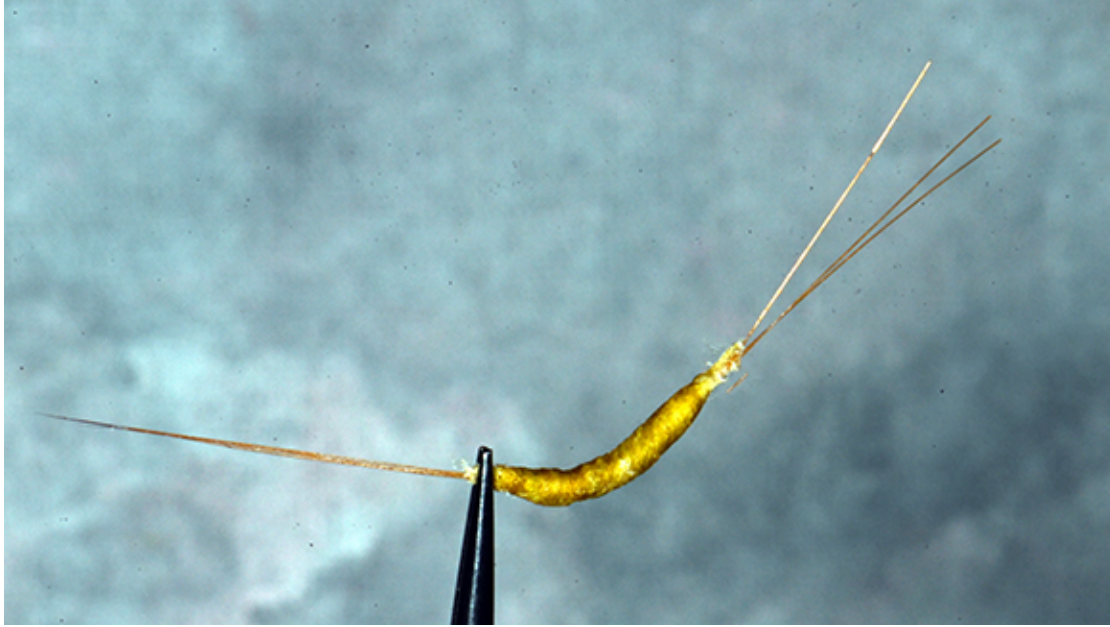
Using long fiber dry fly dubbing material, spin it onto the pin using the rotary function of the vise. It is important that the pin rotates on its axis so there is no wobble. Make a small base of dubbing material approximately twice your desired body length.



Once you have completed your base, attach your microfibetts using your dubbing material.



Continue building the body until you get your desired shape. At this point, using a water-based head cement, coat the entire body and remove it from the pin and let it dry.



The finish product should look similar to this. While drying, I did put a little bend in the body to give the cured body shape of a Mayfly. Now all that is left is to attach it to a hook and finish the fly as you see fit.



It is an easy fly to tie with a little practice. Now I took the simple approach and did not get complicated with wings, hackle, additional dubbing, etc. It is a small fly and it is meant to be fished!