

Monroe Leech

Submitted By Bob Pearcy

Here in Montana most fly-fishing attention focuses on our world-class rivers. Often overlooked are the outstanding stillwaters within a two-hour or so drive of the Bitterroot Valley such as Georgetown Lake, Browns Lake or Clark Canyon Reservoir. Somewhat further are the outstanding lakes on the Blackfoot Reservation near Browing and those near Yellowstone such as Hebgen, Quake, Cliff and Wade lakes. In all of these stillwaters, leeches are an important trout food especially early in the spring and in the fall.

The Monroe leech was developed by Mike Monroe, a northern California fly fishing guide and falls into the category of micro leeches now popular in the famous lakes of British Columbia. These are small leeches tied on a size 10 hook or smaller as opposed to the 2-4 inch long leeches often used for steelhead. The tapered marabou body and tail of the Monroe leech provides lots of movement simulating the undulating movement and profile of a leech. The classic way of fishing them is near the bottom or just above the weeds with an intermediate sinking line. Use a hand-twist retrieve that moves the fly 4-6 inches with a pause in between. However, they can also be fished right off the bottom under an indicator with a chromomid pattern as a dropper fly. After allowing the flies to sink for a minute or two, retrieve with a very slow hand twist with frequent pauses. A little wave action is helpful. I have not tried this technique myself but it is reported to be a very effective in British Columbia.

Hook: Tiemco 200R, size 12.

Thread: Black

Tail: 10-15 marabou barbs pinched off to 1/2-5/8 inch length. Optionally, add one strand of crystal flash or similar narrow flash of contrasting color to each side.

Body: 8-10 marabou barbs tied in at back and wound forward to form a body tapering from tail to head. It takes some practice to avoid trapping too many of the barbules and to have enough to wrap all the way to the head space. High quality marabou with long barbs is important.



Ribbing: wire of a similar color to the flash, or just plain copper.

Head: thread, small and tapered.

The most effective colors are black, dark brown (like above) and maroon.