

Making Foam Poppers Heads

Courtesy of Dustan May and Urban Fly Angler

By

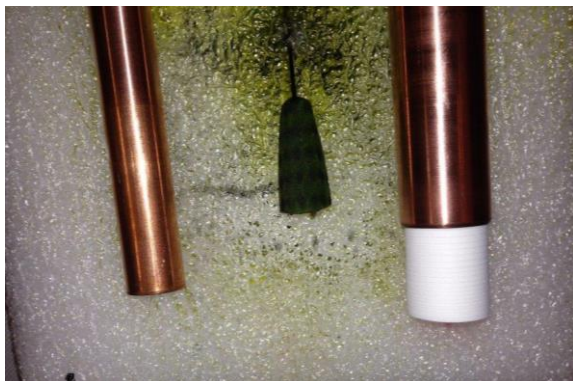
Ian Cox



I found myself in Johannesburg one Tuesday last month and remembering that Richard Simkins of Urban Flyfishers runs a fly tying evening on Tuesdays decided to stay over so I could go along. What a great evening it turned out to be, not only because I met a great bunch of enthusiastic fly tyers but also because I got to see how Poppers can be made.

Who would think that a Durban fisherman would have to travel inland to the big smoke to learn how to tie a saltwater fly. But that is precisely how it worked out. You see Dustan May might live in Johannesburg but in truth he is a true soutie.

I learned a hell of a lot that night bout fishing my own backyard. I also learned how ridiculously easy it is to fashion foam bodied poppers.



You start with a chunk of high density foam out of which must emerge a foam cylinder of a desired diameter and length. Anyone who has tried to use a punch to do this will tell you how unfortunate the result can be. Dustan uses a piece of copper plumbers pipe of the desired diameter sharpened on one edge. This is the cutting edge which is twisted into the foam thus cutting the desired cylinder. You can do it by hand or attach the tube to a drill. Both work equally well.



Then comes the shaping. Dustan did not demonstrate this as apparently it involves the dissemination of proprietary information vital to the livelihood of some of his mates. It isn't hard to work it out though. You need sand paper of various grits and a drill or lathe. Attach the foam to the drill. ([Deltastripers](#) who don't even bother with shaping a cylinder suggests that you do this by pushing a nail daubed with a bit of superglue through the middle of the foam to do this -not too much cause you'll never get the nail out.)

Get the drill going applying sand paper in ever finer grades till the desired shape and finish are achieved and hey presto you have a foam popper body.

Dimensions should consider the size and gape of the hook you are using, the trick always being to dimension your popper body so it does not interfere with the gape of the hook. In other words ensure that the diameter of your popper body is not larger than the gape of your hook.

There are a variety of ways to attach the popper to the hook. The best seems to be to cut a slot into the popper into which the hook is slid and secured using super glue. Alternatively you can slide the hook into the hole left by the nail again using superglue applied more liberally this time.



Decorating your popper body proved the real cool part. Those who subscribe to TCCF will have seen Murray Pedder article on a really cool [Copic](#) airbrush kit. Well Dustan had one and it's amazing. They are really easy to use and come with an array of 200 colours. The pens are also refillable. The downside? This kit is not cheap. Pens range between R50 and R90 each and the airbrush kit costs about R400 and that is before you have shipped it in from the US of A. That said the range of applications is awesome. As Murray pointed out you can even barr feathers and furs. In any event I am sure my wife needs one for her dolls house and her birthday approaches!



Dustan also showed us some great ways to spray patterns onto the popper. Simple household stuff like netting or anti-skid underfloor matting can be used to texture the popper in amazing ways.

All that is left is to stick on eyes and coat the popper with epoxy. Dustan does not recommend UV goo as it gets too hot. Bubbles in the epoxy are removed with the application of gentle heat source such as from a lamp and the finished popper can be left to dry on a rotary dryer.
