

Concept: The "Prophecy," taken from the chapter, "Troubleshooting," Page 124.

*October 24, 2014 SF Snake River Dry Fly Fishing Report: 70°; unseasonably warm/Wind upriver in the morning, downriver afternoon/Partial sun
Day 3:*

Sometimes when dry fly fishing all the stars align.....

There's fish rising at the surface.....

You're on your game.....

You've got the exact right bug.....

There's no false takes or refusals.....

And you commence upon kicking fanny and taking names!!!

In a perfect world this is the way dry fly fishing should always be.....

But then reality trumps your fantasy and you find yourself on the South Fork Snake River in the heart of the BWO season without a single BWO on the water, in the air, or anywhere in the system. There are virtually no fish feeding at the surface and you're forced to figure out what bug in your "Searcher" box will lure fish to the surface. Last count, our company ties like 170 dry fly patterns; which one of those bugs will create magic today? Add to that, the river is providing no recent clues of the bug hatches in the scum lines or in the brush thickets along the edge of the river. Add to that I have no history of the bug hatches over the last 30 days and no insight to weaknesses or tendencies that the fish on this river might harbor. So let me explain how you can see one bug fly over your head and change a slow day into a net full of fish.

On the day before I started fishing around 11:00 a.m. and things were pretty slow for the first couple of hours. Today I hiked out of camp a little after noon and arrived at a long riffle a bit before 1:00. There were two bait fishermen in the center of the riffle so I asked if they'd mind if I fished the top end of the riffle. They gave me the okay so I nestled in at the top of the riffle with a brisk breeze blowing downriver. It was an exceptionally warm day for late October at this elevation and I thought maybe a Fall Caddis pattern might inspire a fish to rise in the fast riffle at the top of the run. I was wrong; and after running the caddis through the run for a half hour, I managed to hook and land a single fish, a nice 17-inch cutty. He ate the caddis in hard current on the very end of a corridor run as the fly began to skate. I skated the fly for a while without another fish joining the party.

I changed rods to my 4wt which had a Dark Mahogany Comparadun #20 tied on with the leaders well stretched. I worked the soft edges of the riffle for about 20 minutes with the same result as the caddis. I hooked one nice fish with the Comparadun and again it was on the end of a run when the bug began to skitter.

It was around 2:30 p.m. as I was working the Comparadun when I see a lone mayfly hover about 3 feet above my head. It was a bright red mahogany Size 18, the exact color we tie our Mahogany Searcher #16. I immediately tie on the Mahogany Searcher and begin running it through the edge of soft water to hard current. Three casts in and I hook a fish in the same water I'd run the caddis and the Comparadun through. That started a pretty wild finish to the day.

I started seeing a few subtle rises occasionally and almost every one of the fish that I spotted ate the Searcher. When I wasn't casting to a rise, I was hooking fish in both fast riffle and soft edge of riffle blindly. The casting began to lessen and the hooking began to increase. Pretty soon I'm spending most of my time fighting fish and photoing them. Sometimes I'd hook a fish 10 feet in front of me and other times I'd connect to a fish on the end of a 70-foot corridor run. I never lost a single fish I hooked on the Mahogany Searcher which is a testament to the seriousness that the fish were eating the bug. They were on the bug and all I really had to do was keep it in the zone where they were living and they'd suddenly materialize at the hook.

My run of luck began to sputter around 5:45 when the clamshell went shut. The few feeding fish ceased so I had no more directed targets, and there was still no sign of an evening hatch developing. I hunted the entire run for 250 yards but the surface was totally unbroken. Even though I had another hour of daylight, the writing was on the wall.

I gathered my rods and began the long walk back to camp and thought of the many times in my dry fly life that one wayward bug I recognized saved the day. Just like that one Mahogany Dun provided the clue to tie on a Mahogany Searcher. Sometimes it's not about matching the hatch, it is more about that specific bug still in the system that the fish would still recognize and react to. I could have well taken a butt-kicking today if it weren't for one tiny clue.

And that in a nutshell is why dry fly is the greatest game on earth, and day after day it provides the most inspiring thing in fishing..... A Great Challenge!!!

Flies that Caught Fish:

*#12 Fall Caddis
#20 Dark Mahogany Comparadun
#16 Mahogany Searcher*