

Hook Study 2022

In our past studies of hook sizes that caught 20-inch or larger fish in a calendar year, a pattern surfaced that smaller hooks (Size 25-14) are most productive. Well, 2022's statistics were a resounding confirmation that small hooks are the key ingredient to catching big fish.

In review, each year since 2018, I've counted all 20-inch fish that reached the net and logged the hook size that caught that fish. The count only included Nate's catch, not Geoff's or any other contributor to our blog. There were some very odd stats in 2022, so I'll try to explain.

1. There were only eight total 20-inch fish caught on large hook sizes (#12-#4). All eight were caught in the skwala hatch on the SF Boise in March. Here are two skwala patterns.



Slow Stone

In a normal year fishing in the salmonfly, golden stone, and hopper windows, it usually produces more big fish on a large hook. Interestingly, I was in every one of those hatches this year, but the fish were more keyed to the smaller bugs in the system at the same time. The fish chose caddis and mayflies over stones or terrestrials. Here are some of the key small bugs used during the stone hatches:



PMD Searcher #16



Flav Searcher #16



Olive Brown Emperor Caddis
#18



Black Meathead Caddis #16



Olive Brown Meathead Caddis #16

It should be noted that in 2022, I missed both the brown and green drake hatches that could have added 20-inch fish on hook sizes #12 and #10.

2. There were 22 fish netted on a Size 14 hook which is significantly more than any previous year. There were two dry fly patterns that overperformed.

- a. #14 Little Mormon Girl fished on the upper Green River, and
- b. #14 Black Get Her Done Caddis used on the water below Fontenelle Dam on the Green River and on the Ranch section of the Henry's Fork in mid-May. Here are the flies:



Little Mormon Girl #14



Black Get Her Done Caddis #14

3. The shocking number from last year is 64 fish landed on a Size 16 hook. That's a nuts number of big fish on a small hook, and here are the fly patterns that raised hell:



PMD Searcher #16



Flav Searcher #16



March Brown Searcher #16



Olive Brown Meathead
Caddis #16



Black Meathead Caddis #16



Green River Caddis #16



Little Mormon Girl #16

4. The 13 fish landed on a Size 18 hook is the lowest count compared to any other year in the study. It's caused by one simple factor: I fished the #16 Meathead Caddis more often than the #18 Emperor Caddis, and that created a drastic drop in fish numbers in the Size 18 category.
5. In every year of our studies, the Size 20 hook has been a major producer of 20-inch fish and it's mostly tied to one mayfly hatch—a Blue Wing Olive. Here are the most productive Size 20 patterns in 2022:



BWO Comparadun #20



BWO No Hackle #20



Blood Midge #20

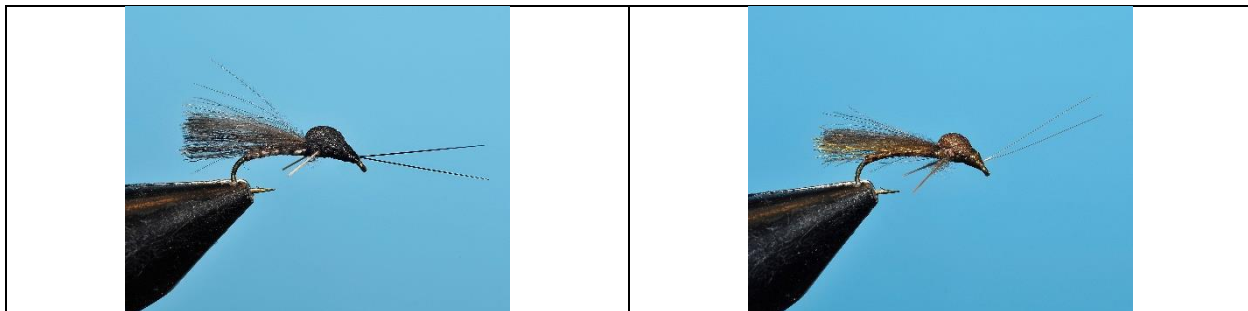


BWO Colored Emerger #20



BWO Hoagie's Cripple #20

6. For the second year in a row, the #1 most productive fly pattern was a Meathead Caddis in two colors:



Black Meathead Caddis #16

Olive Brown Meathead Caddis #16

7. The largest fish to reach the net in 2022 was a 25-inch, 6 ½ pound cutthroat landed on the Green River below Fontenelle Reservoir.



Here are the 2022 statistics:

120 Days Fished in 2022

147 Fish 20+ Inches

Hook Size 12-4

4	0
6	0
8	0
10	8
12	0

Total Fish: 8

Hook Size 26-14

14	22
16	64
18	13
20	31
22	7
24	2
26	0

Total Fish: 139



Second year that the #16 Olive Brown Meathead Caddis and the #16 Black Meathead Caddis have caught more 20-inch fish than any other fly pattern in our inventory.