

Hook Study 2023

The following are the results of our 6th annual hook study. As a reminder, it charts all 20-inch fish that Nate caught in a calendar year, and the size hook that fish ate. Every year seems to produce some odd numbers, but the one thing that is strikingly clear is that small hooks (Sizes 26 to 14) are the powerhouses to hooking big fish.

The anomaly in 2023 was the astonishingly low number of 20 inchers caught on the large hooks (Sizes 12-4). As always, there are circumstances that influence these results such as

1. The winter of 2023 had a long, cold finish, and that in turn made the skwala hatch on the SF Boise occur after the season closed. In a normal year, I count on the skwala hatch to produce 8-12 20 inchers on a Size 10 hook.
2. The seven fish caught on a Size 12 hook could be directly connected to the Green Drake hatch on the Henry's Fork. Here's the pattern that was most productive in that hatch.



Hatching Green Drake

In the small hook (Sizes 26 to 14) category, there were some interesting results as well with power numbers following the Size 20 to 14 hook sizes. Here are the flies that shined.

1. To start, the Size 20 hook had a very productive year scoring mostly in winter on the small bug hatches of midges and BWOs. These were the fly patterns.



BWO Colored Emerger



Blood Midge



BWO No Hackle



BWO Convertible



PMD Colored Emerger

2. The Size 18 hook has been removed from its top spot over the last three years, mostly because of the creation of the Meathead Caddis that is tied on a Size 16 hook. That said, it's still an important hook because it represents the common sizes of multiple mayflies and small caddis. Here are a few of those patterns that racked up 20-inch fish.



Pink No Hackle



PMD No Hackle



Pink Convertible



Dark Mahogany Comparadun



Olive Brown Emperor Caddis



Baetis Emperor Caddis



BWO Hoagie's Cripple

3. The grand prize winner in hook sizes was a Size 16; and as mentioned, the Meathead patterns did most of the damage. But there was a star that rose up in the form of the #16 BWO Comparadun that had some miraculous moments. It scored big in the flav hatches on both the Henry's Fork and the SF Boise River. Here are the All Stars in the Size 16.



Mother's Day Meathead Caddis



Olive Brown Meathead Caddis



Little Mormon Girl



BWO Comparadun



Flav Searcher



PMD Searcher



Green River Caddis

4. The 20-inch numbers continue to increase in the Size 14 category mainly because of these fly patterns.



Black Get Her Done



Big-Ass Caddis



Flying Black Ant

Here's the hook study for 2023 and the previous years for your comparisons.

123 Days Fished in 2023

129 Fish 20+ Inches

Hook Size 12-4

Hook Size	Fish Caught
4	0
6	0
8	0
10	0
12	7

Total Fish: 7

Hook Size 26-14

Hook Size	Fish Caught
14	20
16	57
18	18
20	22
22	2
24	2
26	1

Total Fish: 122



Third year that the #16 Meathead Caddis has caught more 20-inch fish than any other fly pattern in our inventory.

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.

114 Days Fished in 2021

130 Fish 20+ Inches

Hook Size 12-4

4	11
6	6
8	0
10	10
12	5

Total Fish: 32



#1 Fly: Olive Brown Meathead Caddis #16

Hook Size 26-14

14	6
16	53
18	21
20	4
22	11
24	2
26	1

Total Fish: 98

105 Days Fished in 2020

124 Fish 20+ Inches

Hook Size 12-4

4	0
6	0
8	0
10	38
12	0

Total Fish: 38

Hook Size 26-14

14	0
16	19
18	35
20	13
22	15
24	0
26	4

Total Fish: 86



#1 Flies: Brown and Olive Slow Stones #10

124 Days Fished in 2019

169 Fish 20 Inches or Larger

Hook Size 12-4

4	3
6	6
8	0
10	9
12	15

Total Fish: 33

Hook Size 26-14

14	3
16	14
18	63
20	37
22	16
24	3
26	0

Total Fish: 136



For the second year in a row, the Olive Brown Emperor Caddis #18 caught more 20-inch fish than any other fly pattern in our inventory.

153 Days Fished in 2018

121 Fish 20+ Inches

Hook Size 12-4

4	0
6	2
8	0
10	10
12	5

Total Fish: 17

Hook Size 26-14

14	14
16	7
18	40
20	28
22	11
24	2
26	2

Total Fish: 104



#1 Fly: Olive Brown Emperor Caddis #18