

McMurray Ant  
Designed by Ed Sutryn

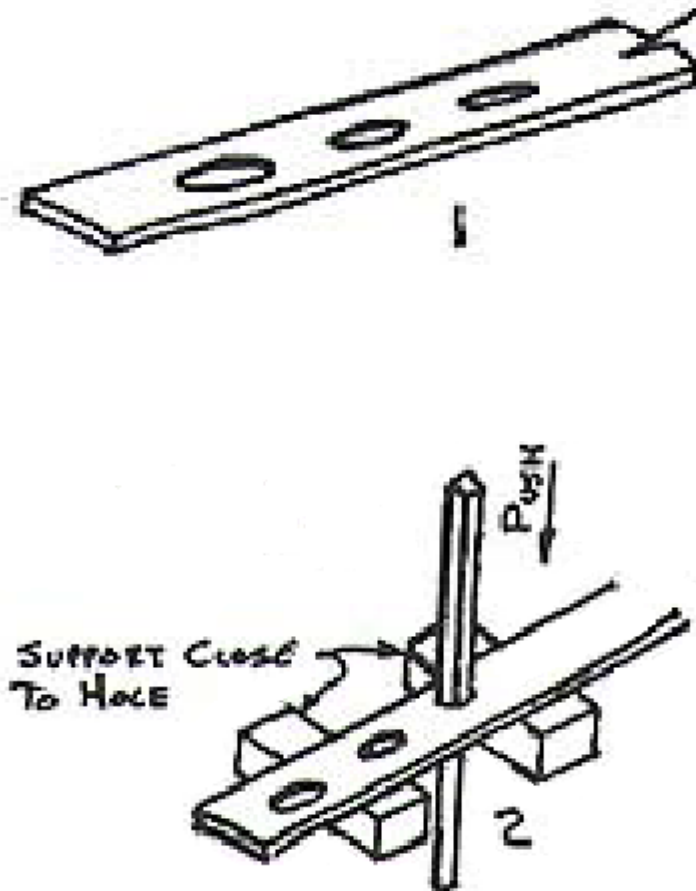
Everyone should be as lucky as I am in having a friend like Ed Sutryn. Ed is a great guy to fish with, talk to, swap stories with, etc. Best of all he's an innovator.

In case you haven't heard of him, he is the inventor of the McMurray ant and other McMurray style flies. If you haven't heard of the McMurray Ant you've missed out on some terrific fishing. You might want to check the archives to see what Henry K. and others think of them.

The major drawback to fishing his ants is finding them. I'll try to outline a couple of different ways that you can use to make your own. The bodies of all the McMurray style flies are based on a cylinder of either cork or balsa wood. No need to run and get the chain saw or other power tools. I'll concentrate on using balsa since it is readily available in hobby and craft stores at low cost in either square or rectangular "sticks", in sheets or in blocks. Generally, sizes vary by 1/32" and, for our purposes, square is satisfactory. Of course we want it round.

I have used several ways to create the necessary dowels.

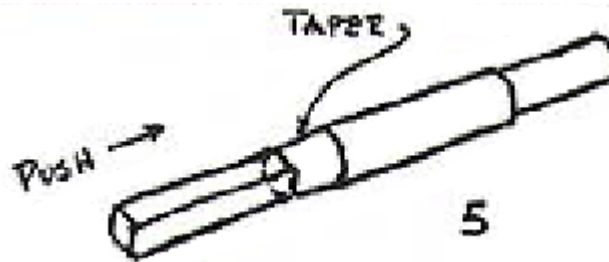
- 1) Take a thin steel material and drill several decreasing diameter holes through it (a hacksaw blade works well). Shave a taper on the end of the balsa and then force the balsa through the hole in the blade. If you start with a large stick, draw through successively smaller holes. I find a series of holes beginning with a diameter of 1/8" and decreasing to 1/16<sup>th</sup> by increments of 1/64" to be adequate. (See Figures 1 and 2)



- 2) Take an ordinary square or hex nut and thread it onto the balsa stick. Actually, I've found the long "stand-off" nuts used on RS-232 D hoods to be excellent. You can leave the ridges formed, or if you prefer a smooth body, sand them off or pull the nut off rather than unthreading it. (See figures 3 & 4)



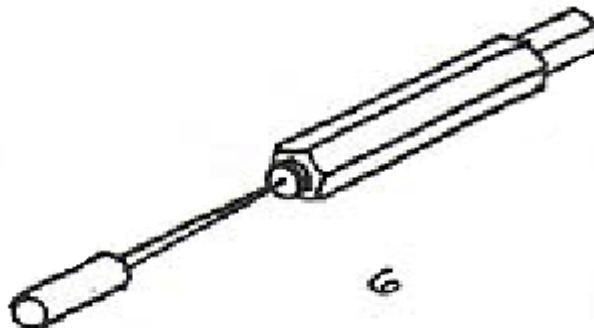
- 3) Use brass tubing sharpened by chucking in a short piece in a drill with a file. If you use this method be careful. The sharp edge of the tube will cut you if you slip!!! Brass tubing is available with the inside diameters decreasing by 1/32". Sanding is the only way to get intermediate sizes using this method. (See Figure 5)



- 4) Draw balsa through sandpaper until you've created a cylinder.

The most difficult part is making a hole through the cylinder. It is possible to find very fine drills but they are fragile, relatively expensive and difficult to purchase. A fine wire or pin will penetrate the balsa easily. Typically a "straight" pin used in sewing is about .025" in diameter; a bit large. "Music wire", hypodermic needles or quilting needles can also be used and are available in suitable sizes. Splitting of the balsa is always a problem.

A solution to splitting is to encase the outside of the balsa cylinder while drilling/piercing. This is why I like 2) above (using the long nuts) as I drill the hole before un-threading the balsa. The same can be done with method J). In methods 1) or 4) it is necessary to use a snug fitting piece of plastic, metal or wood before drilling.



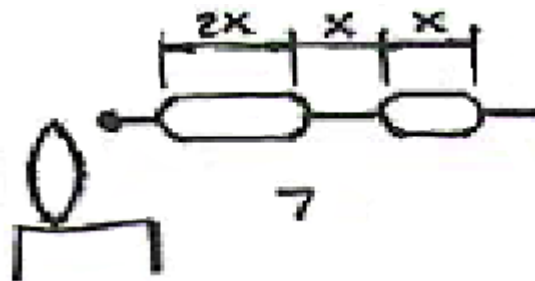
Cut the dowel into lengths for head and abdomen with a knife or razor blade. The body should be about twice the length of the head. Sand the ends of the balsa cylinder round. (See table 1 for approximate sizes)

Table 1						
Nut Size	Approx OD	Approx ID	Approx Inch D.	Hook Size	Head Length	Body Length
#1	.073	.063	1/16"	22	1/16"	1/8"
#2	.086	.074	5/64"	20	5/64"	5/32"
#3	.099	.086	3/32"	18	3/32"	3/16"
#4	.112	.096	1/8"	16	1/8"	1/4"
#5	.125	.109	7/64"	14	7/64"	7/32"
#6	.138	.118	1/8"	12	1/8"	1/4"

**NOTE:**

Hex or square nuts are available in numbered sizes from hardware stores. Coarse or fine threads can be used to create different diameters if you strip the nut off after threading it on. Also metric nuts are available which can provide a series of different diameter bodies.

After the cylinders are made, thread a short and a long one onto a short length of leader material. Leader should be about .010 to .020 diameter. Using an alcohol flame or a cigarette lighter melt the external ends to hold the balsa onto the leader. Be sure to leave at least a head length gap between the components. Modern glues should work also and are worth investigating. (See Figure 7)

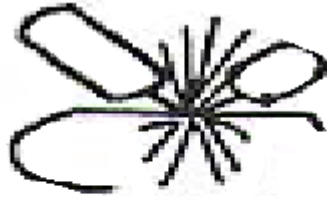


Only painting is left to complete the bodies. Model airplane “dope” is the standard finish but it’s not the same as it used to be, taking longer to dry and not as “hard” either. Fortunately, finger nail polish works as well and currently weird colors including black are the rage amongst the younger set and readily available. Dipping provides a better job than brushing in my opinion but either works.

When the last coat of paint is dry you are ready to tie the fly which is a breeze. Lash the exposed leader material to a thread base on the hook. (See Figure 8)



Tie in a black hackle (wet or dry) and make one or two wraps before securing. Whip or half hitch thread and a drop of head cement to finish. (See Figure 9)



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