

BY MATT MOISLEY  
PHOTOS BY MATT MOISLEY  
AND AARON GOODIS

# B.C. Chironomid Basics

May and June have always been my favourite months, when big, wild rainbow trout gorge on the spring chironomid (midge) hatches—made all the more alluring after impatiently passing the winter tying flies and arranging them in fly boxes, reminiscing about previous seasons, as the days gradually grow longer and warmer.

My friends, Tom Flanagan, April Vokey and Ashley Hesketh usually make a chironomid-fishing trip to the rainbow lakes in the Cariboo district of BC at the beginning of each season, where we indulge in the spectacular fishing and camp on the shorelines. And the fishing is indeed spectacular. I remember one day last year when a hefty rainbow engulfed the chironomid imitation I was dangling 25 feet beneath the boat while I'd inattentively left my rod propped over the gunwale as I sorted through my fly boxes. I just managed to grab it as it was disappearing over the side. The 10lb bright chrome fish, which made three cartwheeling leaps before I brought it to hand, was a satisfying conclusion to the episode.

As fishing chironomid patterns in stillwater is quite different from other styles of fly fishing, trying it for the first time can be a bit bewildering. Here are a few pointers to help make your first trip successful.

## Chironomid Facts

Summer in the BC interior is much shorter than in lower elevations, and the lakes warm up more slowly. While chironomids start hatching in high elevation lakes as soon as the ice is out, water temperatures need to warm up to over 10°C before the hatches really begin to erupt, with the best hatches occurring when the water on the surface is between 15°C and 20°C.



Chironomids typically hatch from between 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., but can start as early as 8 a.m. and continue until 6 p.m.

Much of the time you'll see obvious signs that a hatch is occurring, such as flies pop-

## Matt's Top Three Chironomid Patterns

The fly patterns below have been proven over many seasons. Fish these flies with confidence, as I do every time I sink one to the bottom of BC's fantastic stillwaters.



### Statomid

**Hook:** Mustad C49S #14  
**Thread:** Camel Uni-thread  
**Body:** Anti-static bag  
**Gills:** White Antron  
**Thorax:** Black tungsten 3/32  
**Rib:** Holographic red Flashabou



### Frostbite Full Dresser

**Hook:** TMC 2302 #16  
**Thread:** Tan Uni-thread  
**Body:** Olive Frostbite  
**Gills:** White Antron  
**Thorax:** Peacock herl  
**Rib:** X fine Lagartun silver wire  
**Wing Case:** Pheasant tail



### Rock Worm

**Hook:** TMC 2457 #14  
**Thread:** Gray Uni-thread  
**Body:** Green Flexifloss  
**Rib:** Green Krystal Flash  
**Finish:** Coat with Sally Hansen nail polish (Hard As Nails)

ping to the surface of the water or flying in clouds just above it, especially over shoals. You should also keep your eyes open for birds feeding just above the surface, even if you're too far away to see the flies they're feeding on.

## Gear

The rod should be a #4-#6 weight and 9'-10' with a slow action, which is more forgiving on the hook-set. The line should be a low visibility, fully-sinking, weight forward model. The reel should have capacity for plenty of



backing and a good drag system to handle big, bruising fish.

While you can fish chironomids from a float tube or pontoon boat, a conventional boat provides a much more stable platform. I use an 8', one man, fiberglass punt, as fiberglass deadens vibrations on the hull better than metal. If you have to use metal, line the bottom with carpet.

## Chironomiding Tips

1. Look for midges hatching on the surface. This is an indication that pupae are rising up through the water column beneath and that trout will likely be feasting on them.
2. Use a fish finder to help you determine the depth of the water you're fishing and to locate feeding fish.
3. Match size and colour of the natural insects—although size tends to be the more important of the two, as fish will often key



on silhouette alone. To do this effectively, it helps to collect samples of the naturals by scooping them off the surface of the water, or, once you've caught a fish, by using a stomach pump to remove the contents of its stomach without harming it and examining exactly what it's been feeding on. Check the size of pupal chucks floating on the surface to give you an idea of what size of imitation to use.

**4.** Attach your fly to the tippet with a loop knot in order to let it ride true in the water.

**5.** The length of your leader should match the depth of the water you're fishing. Often, this means leaders of over 20 feet. With leaders this long it's best to taper only the first 10 feet beyond the fly line. The rest should consist of level tippet. This will help the fly sink faster and stay down in the zone.

**6.** Attach a micro shot two to three feet above your fly to help it sink and keep it down. To prevent the shot sliding down to the fly, rig a length of tippet material between the shot and the fly, and pinch the shot immediately above the knot.

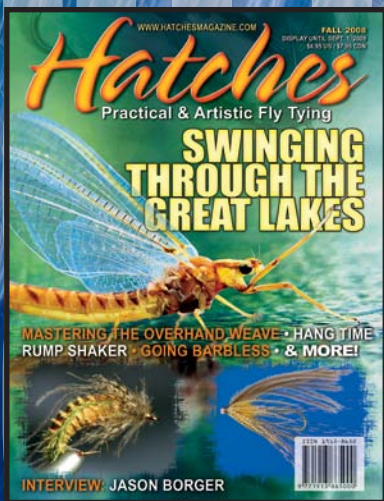
**7.** Always start fishing a foot from the bottom and then work your way up through the water column.

**8.** Double anchor your boat, with an anchor on the bow and another on the transom. It is important to be solid on the water rather than swinging around, as this can give too much lateral motion to the fly, which should be fished vertically, imitating the behaviour of the naturals.

**9.** Use an over-sized net to handle the hefty rainbows which are increasingly common in BC's interior lakes.

In a later issue of *The Canadian Fly Fisher* we'll publish a full-length feature by Matt on more advanced chironomid techniques. ✨

## HATCHES MAGAZINE VOL.2



Practical and artistic fly tying, fly patterns, reader submitted articles, and much more!

**GET YOUR COPY TODAY!**  
**HATCHESMAGAZINE.COM**  
**513-300-8881**

## CANADIAN HATCHES VOL.1



Canadian hatches coast to coast to coast - the early season.

**GET YOUR COPY TODAY!**  
**INFO@CANFLYFISH.COM**  
**1-888-805-5608**