

INTERMEDIATE



SUMMER SNAPSHOTS AND CICADAS

by *Christian A. Shane*

photos by the author

The chirping of the cicada song grew louder and louder as we drove into the valley of the Laurel Highlands. Signs of cicadas approaching the north were evident in West Virginia and southern Ohio. It was only a matter of time before they arrived on the Youghiogheny River near the Pennsylvania border, where we would put in below the confluence. At the confluence, cicadas should be slapping the water with aggressive takes to follow.

Having tied a quantity of cicada patterns, I filled up two tin containers and had prepared for the event like a kid waiting for the sands of summer. This time around, would we once again have an epic trip?

We began the float at daybreak with Zebra Midges and ISOs, hoping the cicadas would come out and play as the sun rose higher. As we drifted by the low-lying areas, sections of cicada static hummed in an encouraging way. We all tied on our different versions of the bug. Peter tied on the Utah cicadas that rode higher in the water. Chub attempted the \$4 Spruce Creek specials, a surplus he bought a couple of years ago. I tested a smaller version with spent wings and monofilament melted eyes. Both big and small bugs had no effect on the bite. By lunchtime, the cicadas still didn't make their presence known on the water to the fish, but the Slate Drakes emerged as we had some alternate surface action. Still, we enjoyed the day, hooked fish and patiently waited for the cicada action.

I pointed out one lone cicada fluttering in an eddy, the first we observed on the water. We rowed over and sat there for a bit to watch it struggling in the water film. Its wings spread out fully, twitching and jerking, though the orange and black bug was not eaten. I leaned over, allowed the bug to crawl up on my hand. Making note of its glowing orange eyes, I pulled out one of my patterns to match. It took off in the wind and headed for the trees. There was still time for the cicadas to start flying, but we were running out of time. We floated cicadas all afternoon in slow eddies and fast runs, not one trout came up to investigate.

By late afternoon, statements like "You shoulda been here yesterday!" and "Maybe, they'll be here tomorrow!" snuck into our brains like so many other mistimed fishing adventures. I recalled the time we camped along Penns Creek, Centre County, for the Green Drakes and witnessed the females swarming overhead at dusk, never to mate with the males and drop. Or, the time we tried to hit the Chinook Salmon on the Kenai River in Alaska and caught the tail end of the run.

Three quarters of the way through the float, the sun lowered between the hills, the coolness of the river air swooped in, and

the cicada static slightly died off. We knew we would have to try another day and time. Silence filled the entire valley.

From the back of the raft, with his own ideal timing, Peter murmured, "Remember last summer when we hit the Tricos on the Big Hole? That was crazy." How could I forget? We had the river to ourselves with pods of trout responding to every cast of our spinner imitations; the big ones ever so subtly slurping our patterns and leaving us with jaws wide open.

"Yep, you caught that monster brown at the take-out." I still owed him a fishing shirt for the last-cast bet.

Then, the memory floodgates opened to the past outstanding trips we encountered. On the Green River, Utah, the caddisflies were so thick the fish gulped mouthfuls. Or, our trip to the Madison River, Montana, when we thought we missed the salmon flies, but they were hunting below Quake Lake. And, the trek through the Powder River canyon in Wyoming. The Cutthroat Trout took every bug we offered.

So no, it wasn't the momentarily timed trip that we had planned, but the micro-moments themselves were perfect—watching the bald eagle battling the mergansers and her babies for space on the river, observing the Slate Drakes buzzing overhead, laughing at the beefy Brown Trout that nearly pulled my rod in. These are the moments we would remember that day.

Often, the photos of our adventures display us holding the final reward, but the moments in between bring us back to the water. ☐

Hoov's Cicada

Hook: Mustad 3906B, #4, Tiemco 2302, #6

Thread: Danville Flat Waxed Nylon in black, 210 Denier Nylon in black or orange

Under body: Awesome 'Possum dubbing in orange

Over body: Fly Foam in black (1/8-inch thick)

Wing: Krystal Flash (25-30 strands of pearl and orange)

Legs: Centipede legs (medium in speckled orange)

Thorax: Orange Awesome 'Possum dubbing



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