

The Perfect ^{10:} **Best**



False albacore are just one of the many hard-fighting saltwater species that go on an autumn feeding frenzy.

SANDY HAYS

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for the Blitz

The autumn run of saltwater species along the Northeast coast holds untold riches for saltwater anglers. Use this selection of guide-tested flies to cash in. **BY TOM KEER**



After a quiet summer, the Northeast coast comes alive in the fall with outstanding saltwater fishing. Striped bass and bluefish run along the entire coastline from Maine to New Jersey before they reach their winter haunts. Inshore from the Gulf Stream, you'll find bonito, false albacore, and Spanish mackerel. Although those five species get most of the attention, there are other game fish to chase, too. As a result, fly rodders can choose their quarry "cause they're all here." Soon enough, the schools will be gone, just in time for duck season.

Autumn bait comes in many different forms—peanut bunker, sand eels, silversides, bay anchovies, butterfish, mackerel, herrings, mullet, and more—so it pays to have a well-stocked fly box. As more and more fly fishermen have waded into the briny deep over the last decade, there's been a real explosion of excellent fly patterns that imitate saltwater forage. But if I had to create a go-to selection of just 10 flies to cover the blitz season, I'd choose these time-tested patterns created by some of the best minds in the game. »





Lefty's Deceiver

Hook: Mustad 34007 or 34011, sizes 4 through 3/0.

Thread: White. 6/0.

Tail: 4 to 8 white saltwater saddles, tied in at the hook bend.

Flash: Rainbow and/or pearl Krystal Flash trimmed to different lengths.

Wing: Two clumps of white bucktail on the sides, dark blue over light blue on top.

Topping: Peacock Herl and pearl Krystal Flash.

Throat: Red Flashabou.

Eyes: Painted on (optional).



September Night Fly

Hook: Eagle Claw 253, sizes 2/0 through 4/0.

Thread: White Danville waxed, 3/0.

Platform*: Gray bucktail.

Tail: Silver Mylar tinsel alongside two white saddles tied flatwing style.

Body: Silver Mylar tubing.

Throat: White marabou tied as a ? collar.

Wing assembly (listed in order tied on): Long white bucktail, 15 strands of purple bucktail, two strands of blue Mylar tinsel, and one black saddle hackle.

Note: The platform is the mechanical floor that holds the feathers up so they swim in the plane

of the hook. It allows the feathers to be supported by the stiffness of the hair. Tie in the platform as a fan for the best support of the tail.



Conomo Special

Hook: Tiemco 600 SP, sizes 1 through 3/0.

Thread: Fine, clear monofilament.

Collar: White Kraft Fur.

Wing assembly (listed in order tied on): Pink ultraviolet Krystal Flash, pale lavender polar bear, pale olive bucktail, olive-brown Ultra Hair, and Black Ultra Hair. Apply a light coat of adhesive between each layer.

Head: Pearl EZ Body, large.

Eyes: Witchcraft stick-on eyes



Ray's Fly

Hook: Eagle Claw 254 NA 1X short, any size.

Thread: White Danville, 3/0.

Body: Silver Mylar yarn.

Wing assembly (listed in order tied on): White bucktail, pearl Mylar tinsel, yellow bucktail, and olive bucktail.

Topping: 7 to 14 strands of peacock herl, extending just beyond the wing.

Lefty's Deceiver

More than a single fly pattern, Lefty Kreh's Deceiver is a streamer template that can be modified to match your local bait. Tie a big, long Deceiver with schlappen tails and lots of bucktail to imitate menhaden or herrings, or use short saddle hackles and small amounts of bucktail to mimic sand eels and bay anchovies. Dress a pattern with brown and yellow and lavender for peanut bunker, or tie them with bright colors—such as chartreuse or pink—to create attractor patterns.

September Night Fly

The September Night Fly, created by Rhode Island angler and striper guru Kenney Abrames, is a go-to mullet pattern. With thin-stem hackles tied perpendicular to the hook, flatwings offer unparalleled movement in the water. The September Night Fly incorporates both bucktail, which gives the fly its rounded silhouette, and marabou, which adds lifelike action. The sparse construction closely resembles the rounded profile of a mullet without adding bulky materials that would make casting uncomfortable. In the fall, you'll find mullet schooled up along the shoreline from Rhode Island through Maryland. Hint: The September Night Fly is outstanding in the daytime, too. [For instructions on how to tie a flatwing, see Abrames's "Flatwings for Trout" in the November/December 2005 issue—Ed.]

Conomo Special

I first used Rich Murphy's Conomo Special—to great effect—more than a decade ago on the North Shore of Massachusetts. Starting with a loose construction of yak hair, some flash, and a wing, Murphy adds a blue wing to imitate a blue-backed herring, a brown wing to imitate a menhaden. Then he varies the length of the fly to match the bait. You can also include a few wraps of lead wire under the E-Z body head, which adds action to the fly. While Murphy named the fly for Conomo Point in Essex, he favors the fly when fishing the outer beaches of Cape Cod during the fall run.

Ray's Fly

Little Rhody native Ray Bondorew's eponymous pattern is a simple bucktail that is without question the single-best silverside

imitation. It's easy to tie, and the colors perfectly resemble a silverside in the water. The length of silversides varies from 1 inch to 6 inches (depending on whether they are juveniles or adults, and you can match their size by tying flies with longer or shorter bucktail. Ray's Fly can be fished alone, but I like to use it as part of a dropper rig. Sometimes I'll fish three or four Ray's Flies of various lengths to see which one gets the most action, and then use just patterns of that size. Best of all, the Ray's Fly works on the whole range of game fish that run in the fall.

Steep Hill Special

The Steep Hill Special, another Rich Murphy creation, is a blended-color, bendback imitation of a sand eel. Steep Hill is in Ipswich, Massachusetts, at the mouth of Plum Island Sound, which known for its cluttered bottom. The bendback construction allows the fly to sweep over kelp and rocks with few hang-ups. The sparseness of the fly makes it easy to cast, and the materials undulate in the current. While Murphy ties the fly with yak hair, you can substitute bucktail or use synthetics. As with all the flies in this list, you can also play around with the color to match-the-bait. I like to fish the Steep Hill Special with a floating line, adding some split shot when necessary, and drift the fly naturally with the current.

Surf Candy

New Jersey's Bob Popovics is best known for the incredibly durable epoxy flies that he created in the 1970s. His flies were designed to withstand the savage jaws of bluefish, and they also work well to imitate the smaller baitfish that albies and bonito like, as well. The Surf Candy has been a staple in fly boxes for a long time because of its versatility. A Surf Candy is tied with a synthetic wing—typically Super Hair or Ultra Hair—and the plethora of colors that are available allows you to fashion both attractor patterns and “match the hatch” flies. Best of all, Surf Candies cast easily, even on lightweight lines.

Flatwing Clouser

A Flatwing Clouser is a kind of half-and-half combination of a Kenney Abrames's Flatwing and a Clouser Deep Minnow. Of course, the original Half-and-Half pattern
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Steep Hill Special

Hook: Tiemco 511 S, size 3/0.

Thread: Fine Monofilament.

Tail assembly (listed in order tied on): White long-select Kraft Fur, tapered Polar Bear Unique Hair, and then 5 to 10 strands of pearl ultraviolet Krystal Flash.

Wing Assembly (listed in order tied on): Pink ultraviolet Krystal Flash, lavender bucktail, pale olive bucktail, dark olive Ultra Hair, and then herring back ultraviolet Krystal Flash. Apply a sparse coat of adhesive between each layer, taking care not to let the adhesive wick backwards toward the hook gap.

Beard: Red Krystal Flash.



Head: Epoxy to secure the eyes in alignment below the base of the hook eye.

Surf Candy

Hook: Tiemco 800S, sizes 2 through 1/0.

Thread: Fine monofilament thread.

Wing: Super Hair or UltraHair. (You can also use Craft Fur, Kinky Fiber, or another synthetic.)

Flash: Flashabou, Krystal Flash, or similar flash material.

Epoxy: Devcon clear 5-Minute Epoxy.

Eyes: Self-sticking decal eyes.

Throat: Red permanent marker, fine or medium point.



Flatwing Clouser

Hook: Mustad 34007 or equivalent, sizes 6 through 3/0.

Thread: Danville's Waxed Flymaster Plus, size A.

Tail: Two saddle hackles tied Flatwing style, topped with Krystal Flash.

Eyes: Lead, tungsten, or steel dumbbell eyes.

Tail: Bucktail, color to suit.

Shoulder: Bucktail, color to suit.



Mushmouth

Hook: Eagle Claw 254, size 2/0.

Thread: Clear monofilament, fine.

Body: White Super Hair, tapered and surrounded by silver Flashabou. Saturated with Softex or Soft Body glue along the entire hook shank to past the bend.

Belly: Pearl Wing 'N' Flash or Angel Hair.

Back: Wing 'N' Flash or Angel Hair in suitable dorsal/back color. Thread wraps and back material should have liberal dose of Softex or Soft Body.

Eyes: Size 3.5EY holographic silver prismatic eye, epoxied.



The Perfect 10:

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combines a Deceiver and a Clouser, but Flatwing Clousers are local-regional favorites. The long, thin-stem hackle tail moves enticingly in the water, and the lead eyes put the fly deeper in the water column. You can adjust the overall length of the fly by using shorter or longer hackles. Try using Abrames's color-blending techniques—as explained in his book *Striper Moon*—to create the most natural looking flies.

Mushmouth

The Mushmouth series is a recent creation, created by Dave Skok in the summer of 1999 to imitate immature herrings. Skok designed the fly with the help of Capt. Chris Aubut when schools of skipjack, also known as mushmouths, were blitzing along the coastlines of Rhode Island and Southwestern Massachusetts. The fly is tied with Wing-n-Flash in a variety of color combinations. Skok has expanded the Mushmouth series to accommodate larger baitfish patterns, which he calls Megamushies, and he had success with them on false albacore in the Martha's Vineyard Striped Bass and Bluefish Derby.

Gartside Gurgler

Jack Gartside's Gurgler is probably the most popular topwater fly for saltwater species, and for good reason: it pushes water and causes a commotion during the retrieve, is lightweight and easy to cast, and stands up to the abuse of many strikes and long fights. The pattern is made from just a bucktail-and-flash tail, a palmered body of hackle or synthetic substitute, and a foam wing, so you can whip up a Gurgler in no time at all. Tie them in bright colors such as yellow or lime green to create attractor flies, or in natural colors as imitators. I particularly like to fish Gurglers on flat-calm days, for it's exciting to watch fish track and gently take the fly.

Crease Flies-Joe Blados

Although Capt. Joe Blados's Crease Fly looks like a popper, with its cupped face and hard body, the pattern was originally designed to be fished subsurface against a current. However, as many folks have learned over the years, fish will hammer a Crease Fly skipping over the surface, as well. The heart of a Crease Fly is basically a cut-to-shape foam body, colored with markers. By wrapping the foam around

White Gurgler

Hook: Mustad 34011 or equivalent, size 2/0.

Thread: White, 3/0.

Tail: Sparse white bucktail and 5 strands of flash of your choice.

Body: White Fly Foam, cut 7 inch wide.

Underbody: Pearl Estaz.



Crease Fly

Hook: Tiemco 911S, size 1/0.

Thread: White Flymaster Plus.

Tail: White bucktail.

Body: White Craft Foam (adhesive back), colored with prismatic markers.


Eyes: Black/Pearl Mylar Stick-On (7mm)

Adhesive: Balsa USA Gold CA (thick)

Flash: Rainbow Flashabou.

Sealant: Loon Head Hard Body



the hook shank, you create a cup at the head of the fly, which displaces water, giving the fly an erratic motion during the retrieve. You can tie Crease Flies with bucktail tails, hackles, and you can tie them on long- or short-shank hooks to vary their size. Kits for making Crease Flies are available at saltwater specialty shops and www.creaseflies.com. 

Tom Keer—a former guide and fly shop manager—is a freelance writer who lives on Cape Cod.