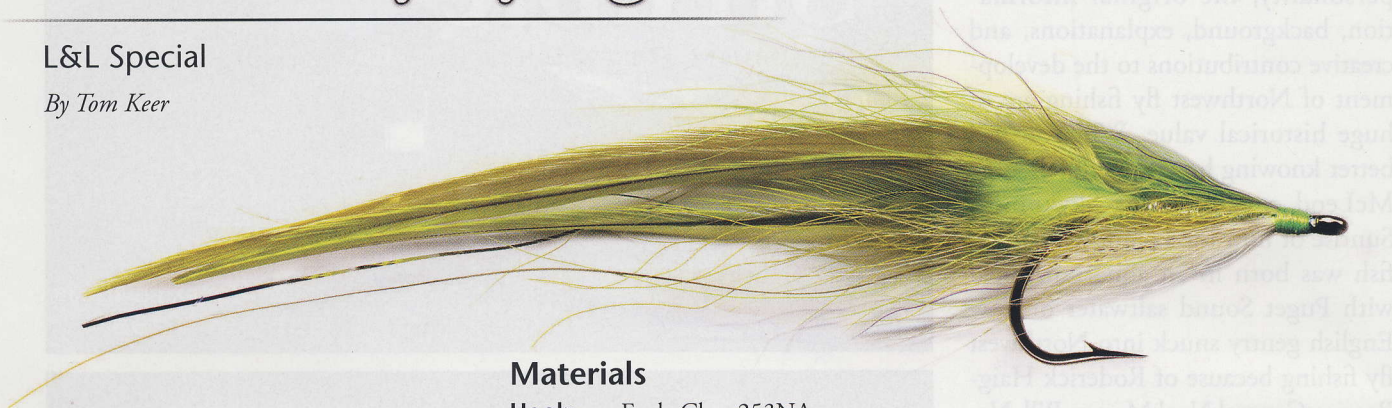


Eastern Fly Tying

L&L Special

By Tom Keer



One bright June day, I decided to check out a saltwater flat about a mile from my home. The wind was light and variable, the air temperature was in the mid-70s, and not a single cloud graced the skies. The Northeast offers anglers about a dozen perfect days each season, when all of the ideal conditions assemble and converge, and this was one of them.

I launched my boat and reached the flat halfway through the ebb tide. Three feet of water washed over the white sand, and I planned to fish the last few hours of the drop, wait out the dead water at low slack tide, and then fish the first few hours of the flood. At the top of the flat, I cut the engine and drifted with the tide. School after school of striped bass moved into the current, the fish's silvery flanks flashing in the sun each time they rolled to inhale medium-size sand eels. I drifted quietly past all the commotion, then motored carefully back to the top of the flat to begin a second drift and to make some casts.

The fishing would be easy, an up-and-across cast into the current, followed by a few mends. Fly choice was also simple: I tied on a 6-inch-long L&L Special, a flat-wing originated by Rhode Island's Kenney Abrames. On my first cast, a legal-size bass closed in on the fly like a duck to a June bug.

The L&L Special is one of the best Northeast flats flies. It consistently takes fish of all sizes, on nearly any day, and particularly excels on bright, sunny days when shy stripers feed selectively.

Flats fishing is an intricate business. There are many different kinds of flats, and the light plays off the terrain and the baitfish in a variety of ways. Properly matching the baitfish's color is critical for success. L&L stands for lemon and lime; the chartreuse and yellow colors of bucktail and

Materials

- Hook:** Eagle Claw 253NA
- Thread:** Chartreuse
- Platform:** Fluorescent yellow bucktail
- Pillow:** Yellow dubbing
- Support:** Chartreuse saddle hackle
- Tail:** White saddle hackle, silver Flashabou, chartreuse saddle, gold Flashabou, fluorescent yellow saddle, respectively
- Body:** Silver or pearl Mylar braid
- Collar:** Fluorescent white bucktail below; fluorescent yellow bucktail on sides
- Wing:** Chartreuse bucktail
- Cheeks:** Turquoise and violet bucktail, three hairs of each color per side
- Eyes:** Jungle cock (optional)

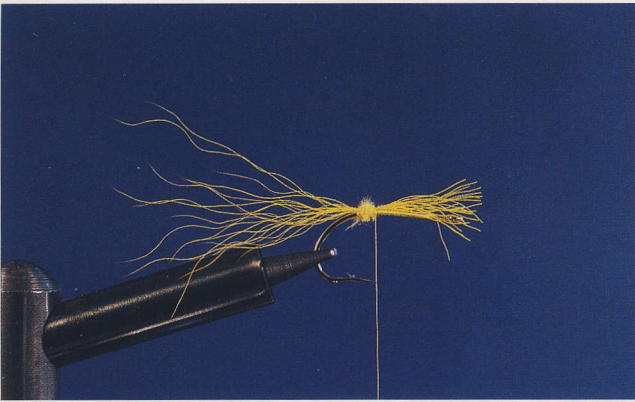
saddle hackles blend to make the fly almost disappear when it hits the water. The L&L Special successfully suggests the colors of silversides and sand eels that adopt the yellow hues of the sand and the sun. On cloudy days or in murky water, the L&L serves as an attractor pattern and aggressive fish smack it hard.

The flat-wing construction in the L&L Special is perfect for fishing in skinny water. The hackles, thin-stemmed so they undulate like a baitfish in even the slightest current, are tied perpendicular to the hook, and their placement suspends the fly in the water column. Usually the hook itself is ample weight to sink the fly to the proper depth; if not, pinch a few split shots onto the leader.

Abrames designed his flat-wing patterns as impressions of baitfish, so he uses a sparse and loose construction to outline the baitfish's profile and then blends the colors to make the fly look natural in the water. If the bass are feeding on large sand eels, use longer saddle hackles. If they are keying on juveniles, tie flies with shorter wings. Experiment with colors: add hints of blue for fishing on partly cloudy days, or add some green to flies used for fishing over kelp beds.

Being sparse in construction, the easy-to-tie L&L Special is also easy to cast. You can cast a 10-inch-long L&L with a stout 6-weight rod. Fish it as you would a freshwater streamer: dead-drifted, strip-retrieved, cast up and across, and mended, swung, or hand-twisted slowly back. All of these techniques work with the L&L Special—just match the retrieve to the baitfish. For more details about the pattern, see Abrames's fly-tying book *A Perfect Fish*, and also visit www.stripermoon.com. And when you want to get a closer look at a 40-inch bass cruising the flats, tempt the fish with an L&L Special.

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Step 1: Remove the short hairs from a bunch of yellow bucktail and spread the remaining hairs laterally to create a support, tying them on the hook in this manner. Make one turn of thread under the hairs to prop them up to the desired angle. Add a pillow of yellow dubbing.



Step 2: Select saddle hackles for the support and for the tail, matching them all in length, width, and amount of webbing. Dress the support hackle curved side facing upward by making two loose turns of thread around the hackle stem, and then steadily pull the bobbin downward until the hackle is properly seated. Trim away the butt ends of the bucktail hairs and the support-hackle stem.



Step 3: In forming the tail, all saddle hackles are dressed with their shiny side facing upward so they curve downward. First tie in the white saddle hackle, then two strips of silver Flashabou, the chartreuse saddle hackle, two strips of gold Flashabou, and finally the yellow saddle hackle. The Flashabou should extend past the end of the fly's body.



Step 4: Wind the Mylar forward to form the body, then dress the collar, with the white hairs on the bottom and the fluorescent yellow hairs on the sides. Next add a wing of chartreuse bucktail. Trim away the butt ends from all of the hairs.



Step 5: Add the cheeks.



Step 6: If desired, attach a jungle cock eye to each side. Then finish the head and add two coats of cement (or epoxy the head).