

Designed in Saskatchewan's pike paradise—works anywhere

▶ DWAYNE "CHIP" CROMARTY

A 2-POUND WALLEYE GETS T-BONED AS YOU BRING IT TO THE BOAT. The small pike that you have on is doing its best imitation of a flying fish, more frightened of the huge shadow stalking it than the hook in its mouth. What was a brightly colored, leaping, flashing jewel is now tattered shreds of grayling.

Most of us have seen these things at one time or another, and in my world, the culprit is usually a northern pike—often a huge one. Large fish like this are frequently opportunistic, even when they are not actively feeding. It is all about the promise of a big, easy meal. As a fly-fishing guide, my challenge is all about creating that illusion in a fly.

I have been fly fishing for pike for about 25 years, and I have spent nearly all those years fishing in what most people would consider heaven for pike anglers looking for trophy pike. Northern Saskatchewan has a well-deserved reputation of being among the finest places in the world to catch high numbers of large northern pike. A "perfect storm" of climate and geology here has created a vast region of the Precambrian Canadian Shield pock-marked with thousands of lakes. The lakes are home to walleye, lake trout, grayling, and of course giant pike.

For fly fishers, these toothy predators are probably the most desirable of all these northern species because of their size, preference for relatively shallow water, and

▶ This 50-inch pike took a Monster Magic fished on a floating line. To see the video of this catch, visit flyfisherman.com and search for "Monster Magic."

Photo | Courtesy of Wollaston Lake Lodge

Monster MAGIC

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Monster MAGIC



Photo | Courtesy of Wollaston Lake Lodge

▶ The aurora borealis lights up the sky on summer evenings after a day of fishing. When you see the northern lights, you know you are in northern pike territory.

their exciting and ferocious feeding behavior. Nothing in freshwater is more exciting than seeing a large wake push out from the weeds and follow your fly. For more than two decades I have been a guide on one of these lakes, so I may be biased when I say that Wollaston Lake—800 square miles of prime northern pike habitat nestled

deep in a boreal forest—is the best place in the world to catch a 50-inch pike on a fly. From shallow spawning bays to deep cabbage beds, lily pads to wind-blown rocky shorelines, or quiet eddies to fast flowing rapids, Wollaston Lake has an almost unending supply of pike hot spots. My summerlong access to this re-

source allows me a great deal of freedom to experiment with a variety of fly patterns. Low angling pressure, a huge territory, and a longstanding catch-and-release policy, all contribute to an extremely healthy population of fish of all sizes.

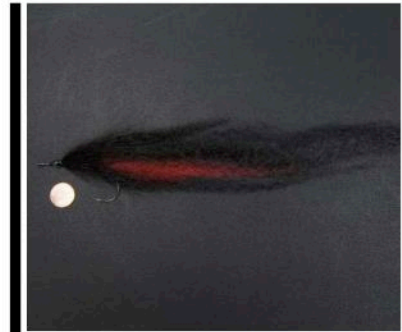
When you see large numbers of 40-plus inch fish every day, it doesn't take very long to get a good idea of how the fish react to different lure sizes, profiles, colors, materials or tying styles.

In developing the Monster Magic, I wanted a fly with a large profile, nearly neutral buoyancy, and a sinusoidal, undulating action. The fly needed to be durable, easy to tie, push a fair amount of water, cast reasonably well, and of course, catch fish.

All of my larger flies are tied "in the round." They have no eyes or gills, and show the same profile from all sides. I firmly believe that the profile and action of the fly are the most important visual cues to the fish. My most successful colors are black and red, and I believe it is because they are highly visible over a wide variety of conditions.

Over the years, I have tried a number of different ways to make a truly large fly. Often, I ended up with a beast that could catch fish, but was difficult to cast. It took the development of specialized fly hooks, like the Ad Swier Absolute Pike Hook, and improvements in synthetic fibers to make a fly like the Monster Magic possible.

Tying fishable flies with extremely long materials requires a few specialized techniques. The long, undulating tail fibers that give this fly its irresistible action are prone to fouling if not controlled.



CHIP'S MONSTER MAGIC ◀

HOOK: #4/0-6/0 Ad Swier CS45BN.

THREAD: Black 210-denier UTC Ultra Thread.

WING: Black and red Slinky Fiber.

COLLAR: Black bucktail.

NOTE: When this fly is new, it sometimes does not sink well. A little pike slime worked into the fibers will cure this. The best flies are the ones that are almost neutrally buoyant, so I find myself with this problem fairly frequently. Catching the first fish cures all!

The method I use with this pattern is based on designs from *Pop Flies* by Bob Popovics and Ed Jaworowski—one of the best books on fly tying and fly design I have ever read.

The layering of progressively shorter (and thus stiffer) materials as you work towards the fly's head provides support for the longer tail fibers. Keeping the bulk of the material closer to the hook bend (Keys tarpon style) also helps minimize fouling.

I see big pike caught on flies of all sizes, and there is no denying that big fish will eat small stuff. However, I am continually in awe of the incredible strikes that I get on the Monster Magic. There is no doubt in my mind, that fish attack a big fly more aggressively than a small one. I have never seen a pike sip a Monster Magic, they crush it!

On a final note, do not get caught up in the myth that you should use smaller lures early in the season, and larger flies later. Big fish eat big forage all season, and I have had incredible success using big patterns in the early season. My largest pike, a 51-inch monster that weighed just over 30 pounds was caught in the third week of our fishing season.

Good luck, I hope the Monster Magic brings you as much success and enjoyment as it has for me. 🎣

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Dwayne "Chip" Cromarty lives in La Ronge Saskatchewan, 375 miles north of Regina. This is his first article in Fly FISHERMAN.

TYING STEPS



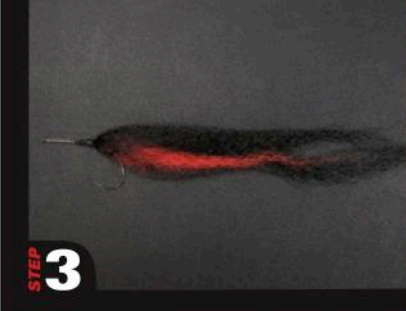
STEP 1

1. Attach the thread to the hook shank and wrap back to just past half way down the shank. Cut a small bunch of red Slinky Fiber in half, place the bunches together and tease the ends until you have a tapered shape. Tie this bunch in at its midpoint with 10 or 12 wraps, working toward the hook bend. Fold over the other end of the Slinky Fiber and wrap forward toward the hook eye to lock the fibers in place.



STEP 2

2. Add a larger bunch of black Slinky Fiber, teased slightly so it doesn't look square. Tie in at one end, leaving an inch of fibers to fold back on the underside of the fly.



STEP 3

3. Take another similar sized bunch of black Slinky Fiber, tease it out so that your 12" bunch of material is 18" to 20" long, and smoothly tapered from end to end. Tie this in at its midpoint, spreading the material evenly around the hook shank. Fold the remaining material back, spreading it evenly 360 degrees around the hook shank, and wrap securely.



STEP 4

4. Take a slightly smaller bunch of the black Slinky Fiber and cut it in half. Tease this shorter bunch out to about 8" or 9". Tie in as the previous step. As you add each bunch of material, move forward along the hook shank. After four bunches of Slinky Fiber, I am usually at about the halfway point.



STEP 5

5. Clip a large bunch of black bucktail and add it to front of the fly. Do not stack, comb, or trim the clump. The key to this step is to keep the hair butts even by doing as little as possible with the material as you transfer it from the hide to your fly. Wrap the bucktail clump loosely three or four times, and using your thumb and forefinger, spread the material evenly around the hook shank. Pull the thread tight to flare the bucktail, and then wrap forward to finish the head. Whip-finish and add head cement.

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Photo | Courtesy of Wollaston Lake Lodge

▶ Northern Saskatchewan is a massive territory covered in a boreal forest and thousands of lakes. It's a fertile testing ground for testing pike flies on truly large predators.