

**JENS BURSELL
LOOKS AT
OBTAINING
BETTER
HOOK-UPS
WHEN FLY-
FISHING FOR
PIKE.**

THE SPRING



A Spring Fly made of rabbit strips in aggressive colours tempted this hard fighting pike



This nice pike was deceived by a brutal spring fly made of red flash

Big flies can be very effective when the pike are on the hunt for a serious meal, but when the fly is attacked and locked between the powerful jaws of a pike, you have to pull the complete fly free to set the hooks. Often the result is that you lose the fish. A good solution to this problem is the Spring Fly, a multi-tube fly with an insert spring which enables the hooks to move, even though the fly is jammed solid in the jaws of death.

The tube zonker shown in this article is extremely simple to make. Put a drop of superglue at the end of the tube and fix the end of a rabbit or arctic fox fur strip. Turn the strip round and up the tube, putting a new drop of superglue for each turn. Fix the end with the glue. Alternatively take a whole tail segment of arctic fox, put superglue on the inside of

the skin, drop the tube on the inside of the skin and fold the skin around the tube. It cannot be easier...

Many of the flash flies in this article are made from Baitfish Emulator Flash that is glued round the tube in the same way as the above-mentioned fur strips.

LAST CHANCE

The first kiss of frost has covered the grass in the meadow with a thin white layer of rime. I'm on my way down to a small local lake with my fly and spinning rods. The sun is high, the air is cold and the weather forecast predicts hard frost in the coming days and nights. Even though I have had fantastic flyfishing with my Spring Flies during many trips in October and November, these are the conditions I have been waiting for for a very long time. In my small, local waters the pike fishing – especially for the bigger ones – almost always peaks in the days just before the first heavy frost covers the



waters with ice.

Today the water is still free of ice, but it will not be for long. I have a feeling that this is my last chance in 2009 to get a



105cm pike that attacked a 30cm Spring Fly made of arctic fox with a rabbit tail jerked through the surface with a spinning rod

10-kilo-plus fish on my new Spring Fly, so it doesn't take me long to make everything ready. I start off fishing in the deeper part of the lake with my spinning rod and a 30cm-long fly made of polar fox and rabbit zonker strips. On the first cast I get an aggressive bite from a 4lb fish that is quickly landed. Although a jack pike, the first fish of the day always gives a good feeling.

The feeding frenzy continues for half an hour and in short time I hook and land five more between 4lb and 8lb on the big fly, but then everything goes quiet. After some fruitless fishing I change to a thinner, smaller fly made solely out of rabbit strips in aggressive purple, pink, yellow and orange colours. This is certainly a good strategy and after just a few casts I get a heavy bite from a nice fish that jumps completely

out of the water several times during the fight. Many good runs later I land a beauty of around 18lb. After a short photo session the pike is gently returned to its home element, but after this the fishing goes dead again.

ON THE SHALLOWS

After half an hour of fishing I spot some baitfish fleeing in panic in only a foot of water on the opposite side of the lake. Even though this spot is difficult to reach, I know it is possible to wade out to a shallow muddy bank from which I will have plenty of space for my back cast with the fly rod. So I fold down my spinning rod and rig up my fly rod. Approaching the spot I see some slow but big bow-waves in the area, so it is with great care that I slowly wade out with my Spring Fly.

Time feels endless as I wade slowly across the shallow water. I'm afraid of spooking the hunting fish, but also afraid of arriving too late after the feeding spell has finished. Finally, I achieve the perfect casting position, and shortly after my fly lands 20 metres out on the shallow plateau. I don't need to strip and twitch the fly back towards me for more than a few meters before a big pike reveals itself with a big swirl five metres away from the fly. My heart is almost jumping out of my throat as, with a massive bow-wave, the pike chases the fly and attacks it so aggressively that it sends cascades of water into the frosty, clear air.

When I strip-strike on the fish and raise the rod, I immediately feel that this is the fish I have been after for so long. The fish answers back with a violent run parallel to the

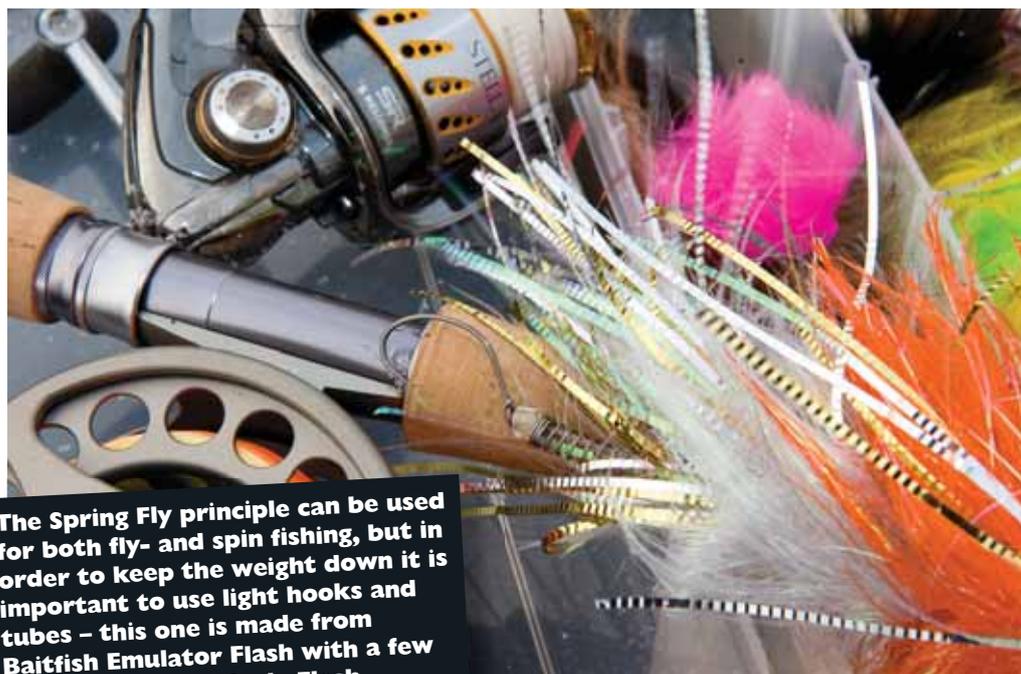


Jens with a beautiful 10-kilo pike which spotted the Spring Fly flash five meters away in just a foot of water

bank, and in the clear water I can clearly see a brown trail of mud as the fish swirls up the sediment in just a foot of water. It ends up being a really good fight, but after a few long runs I'm able to slowly force the fish closer and closer. However, with the fish within reach I realise that I have a big problem. The water at the edge of the bank is so shallow that it's almost impossible to press the fish close enough for landing, and the mud is so soft that it's a risky business wading out very much further to land the fish. I don't have a net – when I spin and fly fish with the mobile approach like today I never bring a net, because it's too difficult to move around within the dense willow bushes.

HOPELESS SITUATION

I don't want to lose this fish, as I



The Spring Fly principle can be used for both fly- and spin fishing, but in order to keep the weight down it is important to use light hooks and tubes – this one is made from Baitfish Emulator Flash with a few straws of Lateral Scale Flash

know for sure it will be the biggest pike ever caught from this lake. Slowly I start wading out in the water with a grim feeling with every step further I take on to the mudflat in front of me. After a few metres I don't dare to wade further and when raising the rod to its maximum I'm just four inches from the being able to gill-grip the fish.

The situation looks hopeless until suddenly the fish goes crazy, jumping free of the water and dancing on its tail in an accelerating movement towards me, past me and up to the edge of the bank! This is my lucky day, I think as I slowly try to turn without sinking even deeper into the mud. The pike is stranded in a few inches of water 10 feet from me, and in my attempt to get back to it before it flaps back into the water, I make a quick move to get back. But my right foot is stuck in the mud and in the attempt to get it free I fall towards the fish on my stomach. The ice-cold water starts to flow into my waders, so here I am soaked in mud with my balls shrinking to the size of pinheads and I still haven't landed the fish. Like another Gollum I creep splashing through the mud and a few seconds later I get a good

grip in the gills of the fish and scramble myself and the fish back on to the muddy bank. I have it!

Unfortunately the mud bank is too soft for performing a psychopathic screaming-happiness dance without sinking in again, so instead I slowly wade to land with the fish and sack it in another place, where it's a bit deeper. I'm soaked, and my teeth are performing an uncontrolled stepdance, so I decide to drive home and get some dry clothes on before

photographing the fish. An hour later I gently release the pike, a 43-inch beauty of 22lb.

The next morning two inches of ice cover the lake. It had been the last call for sure.

Despite fishing this small local lake for years with wobbler, jerkbait, baitfish and spoon, I ended up catching my biggest fish on a fly. During the short trip I got eight pike, and knowing my statistics from earlier fishing with big flies, I feel confident that I would perhaps only have landed



The rig bits for a medium sized variant of the Spring Fly concept: BFT No-Kink Titanium, body modules made from S-cut rabbit strips, twin tail of rabbit, spring from BIC ball pen, 0.5mm transparent protection tube from Power Light light stick, Gardner Kwik Lok, treble with split ring and 7mm Rig Ring, Jackson Flip'n Sinkers to insert on the inline wire if you need to fish deeper or cast longer



End hook mounted for a quick change with Gardner's Kwik-Lok that freely can be dragged or pushed through spring and tubes – another good quick lock suitable for this purpose is Nash Quick Change Rig Swivel

When using flexible tube such as aquarium tube you can slot a rattle stick or light stick into the tube for extra attraction

60-70% of them with the normal pikeflies I used to use. What a day!

advantage of this is also that you can change parts of the fly damaged by the pike's teeth without having to retie the complete fly. Likewise you can change a damaged hook without sacrificing the whole fly. An additional advantage is that during fishing you can easily

change the tube modules to new segments of different colours and densities, in order to create the perfect fly for the day. This means the angler does not have to take a huge arsenal of flies with him. Apart from these practical advantages the multi-tube fly system, it opens

up for another very important dimension: a more effective hooking compared to traditional flies.

The problem with flies and baits in general is that if the bait is locked between the jaws of the pike, you cannot hook the fish. The result, therefore, is

MOVING HOOK SYSTEMS

Tube flies for pike present a lot of interesting possibilities for both fly-fishermen and anglers spinning with big casting flies. If the tube is mounted so it can slide up the trace, you minimize the leverage effect, just like when using inline lures. However, the effect can be minimized further to almost zero by splitting the tube into several smaller segments. The

30cm multi-tube Spring Fly with arctic fox body, flash spring-skirt and rabbit twin tail – both top hooks are mounted on wire running parallel to the fly and fixed in the top end of the fly in a triple swivel



Left: Two-three turn blood-knot around a rig-ring serves as fixed stop for spring movement and the end of the wire can be used for a tail stinger

that after a few seconds the fish suddenly loosens its grip before it is pricked by the hook. What happens next is not difficult to figure out: the bait falls out and the line goes slack... The problem, which is very prominent when using big baitfish for pike, was the reason why some years back I developed a special pike rig to deal with this: the semi-sliding release rig with Twinex hooks. (If you have not had all the issues of *Pike & Predators* you can see this article at my website: www.bursell.dk.) The great effectiveness of this rig is due to a moving hooks system that enables them to move immediately during the strike, despite the bait not moving a single millimetre between the jaws of the predator. The result is in my experience a much higher frequency of landed fish compared to using conventional treble hook links.

I had already experimented with spring inserts on my rigs, but found that I achieved a better effect and a more delicate presentation simply by using a semi-fixed float stop on the trace instead.

With very big flies, this problem is exactly the same: What could be easier for a hungry pike than to grip and lock a 30cm-long fly made from polar fox tail or rabbit between

its jaws? The teeth penetrate into the skin and underlying tube and filter into the thousands of fine hairs. The same problem applies to big, heavily dressed flashflies, but is less pronounced here because flies to cast with a fly rod are normally much smaller, only weighing up to three grams.

In a big fly it's possible to hide the spring well inside the fly, so in order to create the desired moving hook effect on the fly I insert a spring in the lower part of the tube fly, making it possible to set the hooks very effectively no matter how the fish take the fly.

THE SPRING FLY

In its most simple form the Spring Fly is easy to make. The spring is inserted over the trace in the lower part of the fly, either hidden inside the tail or at the root of the tail. Mounted this way you can always set the hook even in the situations where the wildest strip strike doesn't leave a chance for moving the fly itself.

For most of the bigger flies I use a spring that you almost certainly already have in your house right now. This spring comes from one of the most commonly used cheap ballpoint pens BIC M10 that costs in the region of 50p. This spring only weighs 0.3g which is light enough for a normally dressed synthetic fly under 2.5-3g. If you want even lighter springs, they are quite easy to get hold of as spare parts for different types of fine mechanics.

The BIC spring is 5cm long and enables the hook to move approximately 4cm, despite the fly being locked in position. Normally this is more than enough to set the hooks firmly. If the hook points almost touch the inside of the mouth when the fly is locked, a movement of less than 1cm is enough to ensure success. If you want to make a hook movement of more than 4cm, you just overstretch the spring a bit or find a longer spring. Alternatively, you can insert several small springs, either

touching each other or mounted separately between the tube segments in the lower part of the fly.

HOOK ATTACHMENT

The Spring Fly can be mounted with many types of hooks. For fly fishing I normally use one single and rather light hook like an Owner S-61 size 1/0 at the end of the wire. Many fly anglers prefer 0.7mm mono or hard mono and in this case you just slide the trace through the tube modules plus the spring and tie the hook with a grinner knot at the end. When there is

need for change of hook or tube modules, you simply cut the knot, change parts and retie the knot.

For fly-fishing for pike I prefer to use soft wire such as the extremely durable Drennan woven E-Sox Titanium Pike Wire. Here I tie a tight Rapala knot at the end secured with superglue. This enables me to mount and demount the hook using the loop-to-loop technique, giving a good flexibility for a quick change of hook and tube modules. At the wire over the top end of the fly I mount a Drennan Float Stop in order to create a flexible front if



Savage Gear Smileblade, being made from Reflexfolio it's lighter than a metal propeller and therefore well suited for fly-fishing – note the small pearl which minimizes friction and facilitates rotation, and the float stop behind the fly which functions as semi-fixed flexible front of the fly and makes sure the propeller does not get so close to the fly that rotation is hindered



On very light flies with thin and light tubes, you'll need a suitable hair-needle like this Prologic Boily Lip Stringer Needle to drag the loop through the tube

I decide to change the length of the fly in either direction.

For situations and flies where a loosely hinged connection between trace and fly gives a more attractive movement pattern of the fly, I end the Spring Fly with a 1.5-2mm Nash Rig Ring that can be hinged to the upper trace with a snap lock or fixed loop. This also gives the possibility for using less visible front trace materials, 40-50lb hard mono or 0.8-1.0mm fluorocarbon, if necessary in clear water.

When I use the flexible loop-to-loop attachment for the hook, I normally don't tighten it up completely around the eye. The reason is that most wires have a good memory, resulting in a deformation of the loop that makes it more difficult for the loop to pass through the tubes when shifting modules. In order to fix the loop I mount a small Drennan Float Stop over the loop and push it up the loop to the hook eye, semi-fixing the hook well enough to stay there during practical fishing (see photos).

On flies with a fixed top, you allow a bit of free space on the wire, so you have space for inserting a weight or two. On small to medium sized spin flies the front hook can be attached directly in the front eye.

The tube construction also opens many possibilities for mounting propellers and actions discs.

MEGAFLIES

It may be necessary to mount two or even three hooks on very big flies in the 20-30cm range. This is mostly relevant for the big spin-casting flies. It could be tempting just to insert some extra hooks between the tube modules, but this will give inferior hooking. The best way is to obtain an instant pricking and moving hook effect on the upper hooks, and in order to achieve this, they must be anchored to a point in the top end of the fly. Because of this I normally end my multiple hook spin flies with a triple swivel at the top, to which I fix the top of a wire



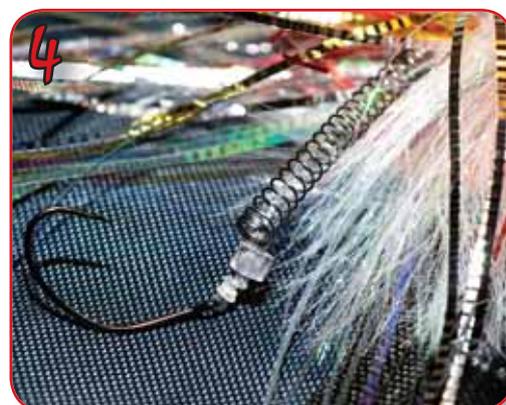
1
When all the tubes and rig-bits are pushed up the trace, you can attach the hook loop to loop when using thin and soft wire types – note the small Drennan Float Stop mounted on the root of the loop



2
The loop is locked in position by pushing the float stop (which must be of smaller diameter than the tubes) up to the eye without tightening the loop to a knot – the angle between shank and wire varies depending on which way through the hook eye the loop is pushed



3
When the loop is pushed through the eye from the other side you achieve a steeper angle between wire and shank, giving a hooking effect a bit like the carp anglers Claw Rig – I think this type of hook mount is most effective if you let the pike turn with the fly before striking



4
The Spring Fly can also be fished on an ordinary mono or hard mono trace where the trace is pushed through the tubes and spring and tied to the hook with an ordinary grinner knot

hooklink that runs parallel down the side of the fly. This covers the total length of the fly but gives an instant pricking and moving hook effect also on the front hooks. The fact that the wire and hook are held a bit away from the fur of the fly gives a better hook exposure and enables you to drop a few sizes from size 1/0 to 2 in order to get a thinner wired and sharper hook for better penetration.

On classic spin flies with rabbit twin tails, you will miss some takes when shy fish snap at the end of the tail. You can lessen the problem by making a tail-stinger from the piece of wire left when making the blood

knot over a rig-ring. In this version of the fly it serves as a fixed stop for the spring. Mounted this way you lose less fish, but it demands a softer casting style to avoid the tail stinger hooking up on the main line. Put a finger on the spool just before the fly lands to avoid this.

For spinning with mega flies where the weight of the tube itself is less important, I normally use tubes with a rather large diameter that makes it much easier to make a quick change of modules, because you can attach a lock at the end. I simply use 5mm aquarium tube, which also has

the advantage that the softness of the tubes enables me quickly and easily to slot rattle sticks into it and take them out again. The tubes are so big that my favourite lock for this purpose, the Gardner Kwick Lok, can easily pass through tubes and spring to enable a quick change of hooks and tube modules.

Taking all these advantages into consideration, I have no doubt that using multiple tube fly systems combined with a spring insert gives a lot of possibilities – not only in terms of flexibility but also enhanced hooking properties and therefore more landed fish.