

Cashiers Outside

Giant orange sedges flutter with fall color

By David Joy
Staff Writer

Photo by Sara Hill

While the great Western waters are known for milestone hatches like green drakes, hex hatches, and salmonflies, fly fishermen often overlook Eastern waters in terms of entomology. For the most part small caddis hatches and blue winged olives are the bugs of Appalachian waters, with sporadic golden stones and giant stones present in summer.

However, one insect arrives yearly to mark one of the hottest seasons for Appalachian fly fishing. The October caddis (also known as the fall caddis, giant orange sedge, or Dicosmoecus) is in my opinion the great hatch of the East. These bugs emerge as the leaves change color and trout tune in during late evening hatches often feeding on nothing else.

While most caddisflies are very small, ranging from 3/8 to 1/2 inch in length, the October caddis is the giant of the family. Generally at least an inch in length, these bugs are just as big as the golden stoneflies famous in summer. Being such a big meal for fish, the October caddis is the primary evening meal for fall trout.

Also unlike most caddisflies that range in color from tan, gray, and black, the October caddis is truly a testament to the season. From bright orange to the rust color of dying oak leaves, these insects match the foliage of fall.

October caddisflies hatch in late afternoon and early evening, and despite its two-week life period the bugs are seldom seen in early mornings or mid-day. Yet when the sun begins to fall, fly fishermen should break out the big flies in bright oranges to key in on the hatch. I like to use brighter oranges, as darker shades tend to become dark brown once wet.

Pupae patterns can be fished in early afternoon to match the emergence of larval caddisflies. Once late afternoon and early evening sets in, fly fishermen should focus their efforts on top with large dry fly presentations. My favorite patterns for this hatch include large orange Sparkle Pupae in sizes 10 and 12 in early afternoon, and orange Stimulators in sizes 10 and 12 as the evening comes on. Many other patterns will also work well to match the hatch, but keep in mind large size and orange color.

Appalachia may not be known for the premier trout hatches that fill magazine features on Western destinations year in and year out, but the arrival of the October caddis may be as close as it gets. Keying in on these giant sedges is a fantastic way to fool unsuspecting trout with the colors of fall. 'Tis the season for sedges so head to your favorite stretch of stream and throw a few bugs.



Photo by Sara Hill

Sight fishing to repeated rises is a great way to find fish. Keep a low profile, watch for rises along the stream, and then make a stealthy approach to the fish.



Photo by David Joy/Staff

The October caddis (also known as the fall caddis, giant orange sedge, or Dicosmoecus) is the biggest hatch of the fall. Choosing patterns to mimic this species is a fantastic way to tempt fall trout.



Photos by Sara Hill

Above, while short casts are much easier to manage in fast water, fish a long line in deep pools as fish will inevitably be more attuned to your presence. Below, the reflection of fall leaves against a stream is enough to make anyone dust off their rod and hit the water.



Photo by David Joy/Staff

Patterns from size 16 to 10 will match a variety of present caddisflies, but be sure to focus on oranges, coppers, and rust colors for bodies. Remember these insects grow to over an inch in length so many large patterns in orange will match late evening sedges.



Photo by Sara Hill

This golden-bellied brown trout fell to a large October caddis pattern on the East Fork of the Tuckaseegee.