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## Best Squirmy Wormy Yet

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Midges are an important part of the food web in many streams, including the Brule. The San Juan worm, designed to imitate Chironomus midge larvae (blood worms), had a controversial beginning. Anglers would often shuffle their feet in a stream, dislodging the larvae before fishing. That practice didn't go over well and was soon banned! Pink rubber worms for steelheads became the rage in the 1990s. Originating in Canada, they are now popular on the Brule and dangle from

branches in many heavily-fished spots by the end of the season. The Squirmy Wormy uses a more lifelike silicone rubber than the old pink worms, which is much more lifelike than the chenille used for San Juan worms. The U.S. team won while using it at the 2014 Youth World Fly Fishing Championship. The "fly" was soon banned from international competitions, like those in the Czech Republic, because of its effectiveness. I copied earlier patterns when I first started tying them, although I disliked tying down the wormy material as it became "squirmy" and the thread created a pinch or break point. I did, however, enjoy watching my grandkids fish it under a small bobber with their little spinning rods! They often caught every fish that saw it.

Fish sometimes bit the ends off of the old versions that the grandkids (and maybe I!) tested. Breakoffs occurred at the tie-in points. As a fly tier, I was thinking about improvements to better mimic Mother Nature's naturals when I came across Tim Cammisa's YouTube video titled "BEST Squirmy Wormy Yet?!" (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lqtPRiP2n58>). His opening line is, "Oh no. Say it ain't so. Another squirmy wormy fly-tying video..." I emailed Tim and thanked him for sharing his video, telling him what a hoot I thought it was. He okayed the use of the pattern he featured as our Fly of the Month. The version Tim describes avoids the "pinch points" and allows you to replace the bodies on the same hook while on the stream! Bodies are simply held in place by orthodontic elastic bands. It's a 5-minute fly from start to finish, and it's reuseable. A controversial "fly?" Perhaps, but it's as easy as it gets for making a fish catching "thing" and it's great on the point of a two-fly rig.

### **Recipe**

1. *Hook: Size 10 Fulling Mill 5125 (or similar hook for migratory fish). This is a large gap, 2x heavy, barbless hook.*
2. *Bead: 3.8 mm or 5/32-inch metallic pink. A slotted bead is more user friendly than one without a slot.*
3. *Thread: Fluorescent pink UTC 140. Put the bead on the hook with the bead against the hook eye. Start the thread behind the bead, creating a small thread dam behind the bead. Overwrap the hook shank thoroughly to the just before the bend and back, making sure the hook shank does not show through. Return the thread to the middle of the hook shank.*

4. *Beginning the body: 1/8<sup>th</sup>-inch orthodontic elastic band (see note at bottom for a source. I “pre-stretch” the band almost to the breaking point a few times with my fingers. Then, secure the band at its center with a loose wrap and a few solid pinch wraps. It should be tied in on top and in the middle of the hook shank. Stretch the band rearward with the small hook of your whip finish tool, and overwrap it rearward to just before the end of the underlying thread. Now, do the same with the front half of the band. You should end up with a small band-loop at each end of the hook shank (see photo). Whip finish behind the bead, and use UV glue to coat the body. Don’t get the UV resin in the loops. Do not use super glue.*
5. *Finishing the body: Wapsi Sili Worm (similar body material is sold by other companies). Worms are usually about 5 inches long. Cut a 5-inch piece in half. Put your bobbin threader through the rear loop and grab the very end and pull through the loop. The more you stretch the wormy on both sides of the loop, the easier it is to thread the loop with the wormy. Repeat for the front loop. You can adjust front and rear lengths to your own liking.*

Note: Orthodontic elastic bands are available from PlastCare USA

<https://plastcareusa.com/store/assorted-colors-orthodontic-latex-elastic-bands/>. I use their heavy, 6.5 oz., 1/8-inch “chipmunk” size in assorted colors.