

Like Larry Wegmann would say to me, Dennis you going down that rabbit hole again. Well he is right. I have been down this for awhile but it has paid off. Finally, with the help of others who have used this bed spread material and had some of the original material that they shared with me, I have found it. The Bed Spread Fly has new life and the original material used for this fly is special. So let's start from the beginning.

Al Bourisaw in his article Twenty-Five Best Flies for Missouri Parks and Streams talked about the Bed Spread Fly. Al said, The Bread Spread was first tied by Bob Gaston of Gaston's Fly and Gun Shop located just outside of Bennett Springs Park. Al passed away on September 4, 2021. Bob ordered the material from a bed spread manufacturing company somewhere out east. Once the fly caught-on, Bob purchased a lasting supply of the material. Bob is no longer in business and passed away on May 26, 2017, so, this fly maybe hard to add to your fly box. The jig is sometimes called the "Meat Fly" or "Flesh Fly" as it appears to be a hunk of flesh from a dead or skinned trout. We have all seen trout fighting over or swimming with a piece of a skinned trout in their mouth. It is a great time to tie on that Bed Spread. Check out Al' web site: [Missouri Fly Fishing/Renegade Fly Fishing](http://Missouri Fly Fishing/Renegade Fly Fishing)

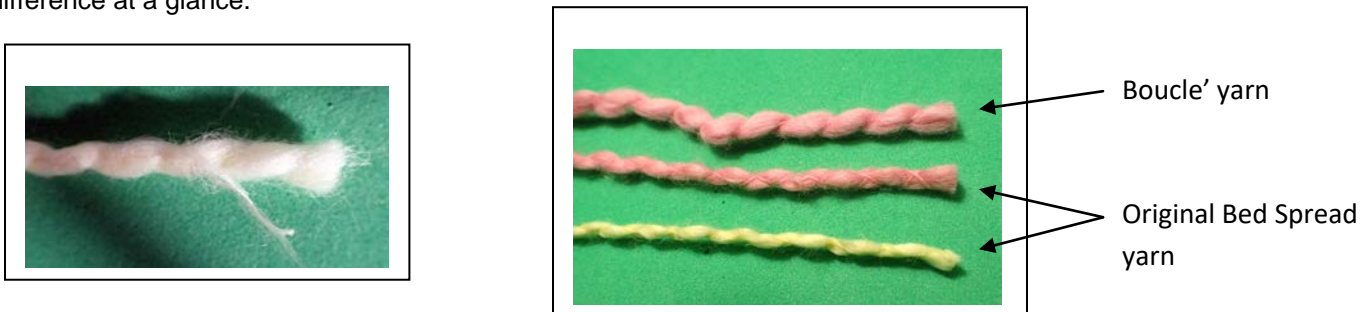
Over time, the popularity of the Bed Spread fly died out. One of the main reason, was the special yarn that Bob bought was no longer available. The fly was still being tied and like I used yarn that was different than the original. The Bed Spread fly with the new yarn would caught fish but not like the original Bed Spread fly.

About two years ago, I did try tying some Bed Spread Flies with yarn I had on hand and did not have the success I was hoping for. Over a 6 month period in 2018, I had been on the search for the original cotton yarn which Bob Gaston sold and used on his Bed Spread flies.

My first purchase was from Hobby Lobby. I bought three colors, off white, light yellow and rose which cost me \$10.00. That was the first generation in trying to copy the Bed Spread fly material. The yarn caught fish but it was not the original. Jerry's kid got all the materials I had on this one.

Then John Walther sent me what he said was the original and it was a 2 ply cotton yarn. So, I was off to the shops and internet searching for this yarn. I found a yarn shop in Kansas City that had a close match but a little thicker. I purchased the same three colors and it only cost me \$75.00. This yarn is called Boucle' (sounds like Boo Clay). A two ply 100% cotton yarn with only one cotton thread to hold the soft combed yarn together.

We know that this Boucle' cotton yarn works. But the Boucle' is a two ply and original Bed Spread yarn is a three ply. The Boucle' yarn is almost twice as thick as the original Bed Spread yarn. If you compare them side by side you see the difference at a glance.



We caught great numbers of fish at Bennett Springs and Roaring River.

I think I am becoming a yarnologist.

Then finally I received the original yarn that Bob Gaston used for his Bed Spread fly from Dave Cook and Al Bourisaw. Dave said that Bob gave him some of this material and Al sent me the original package with the in it that Bob Sold.

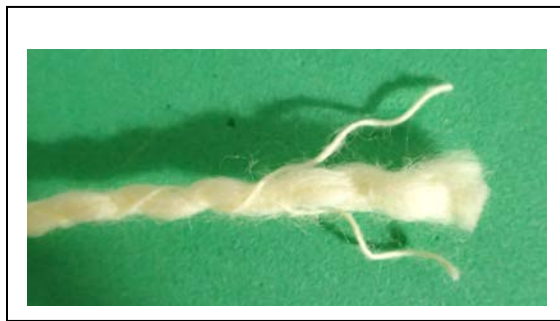


Thanks to AI for sending one of the original packages of Bed Spread yarn from Bob Gaston Shop before he closed it.

On the card is about 6 feet of material wrapped around one of his business card.

The price \$1.99.

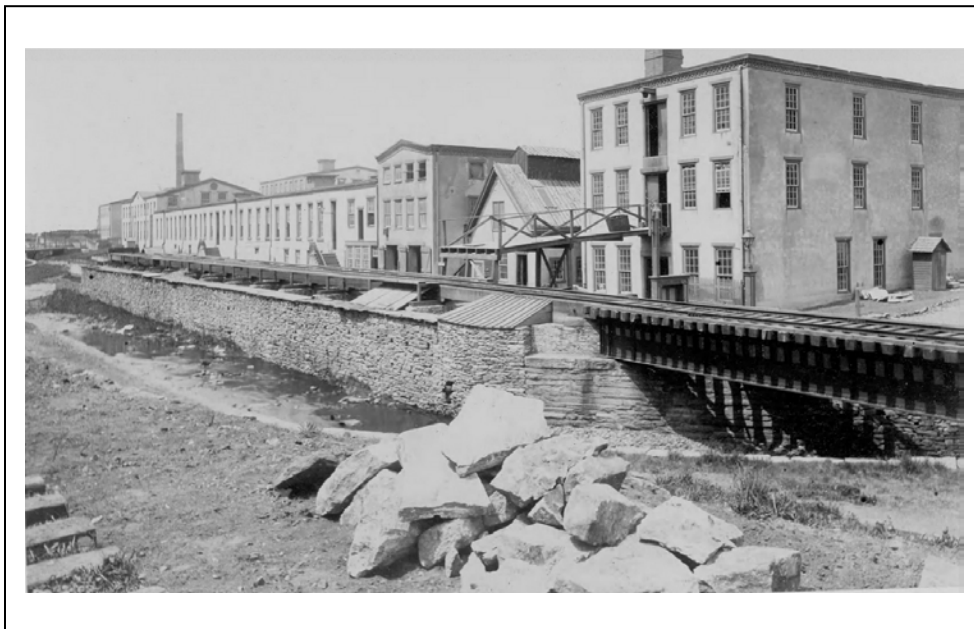
I took pictures and went on an internet search. A lot of companies did not answer may request for help but one did. Weaver Nancy with the Woolery Company, Frankfort, KY 40601 – said, that is indeed what we call Softball.

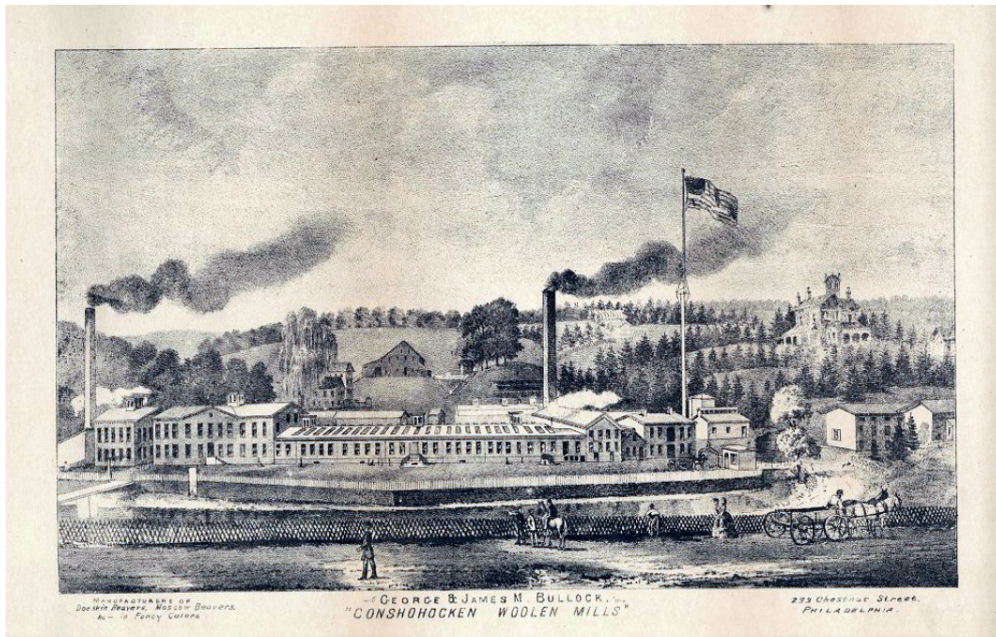


With this information, my search continued. And here is what I found out.

Softball Yarn is 100% Combed Cotton yarn and was patented by Conshohocken Woolen Mills in 1979. It is ideal for just about anything that needs to be super-soft and durable. This yarn is for baby blankets, throws, Afghans, jackets, tops, and sweaters.

The Conshohocken Woolen Mills was founded in 1909

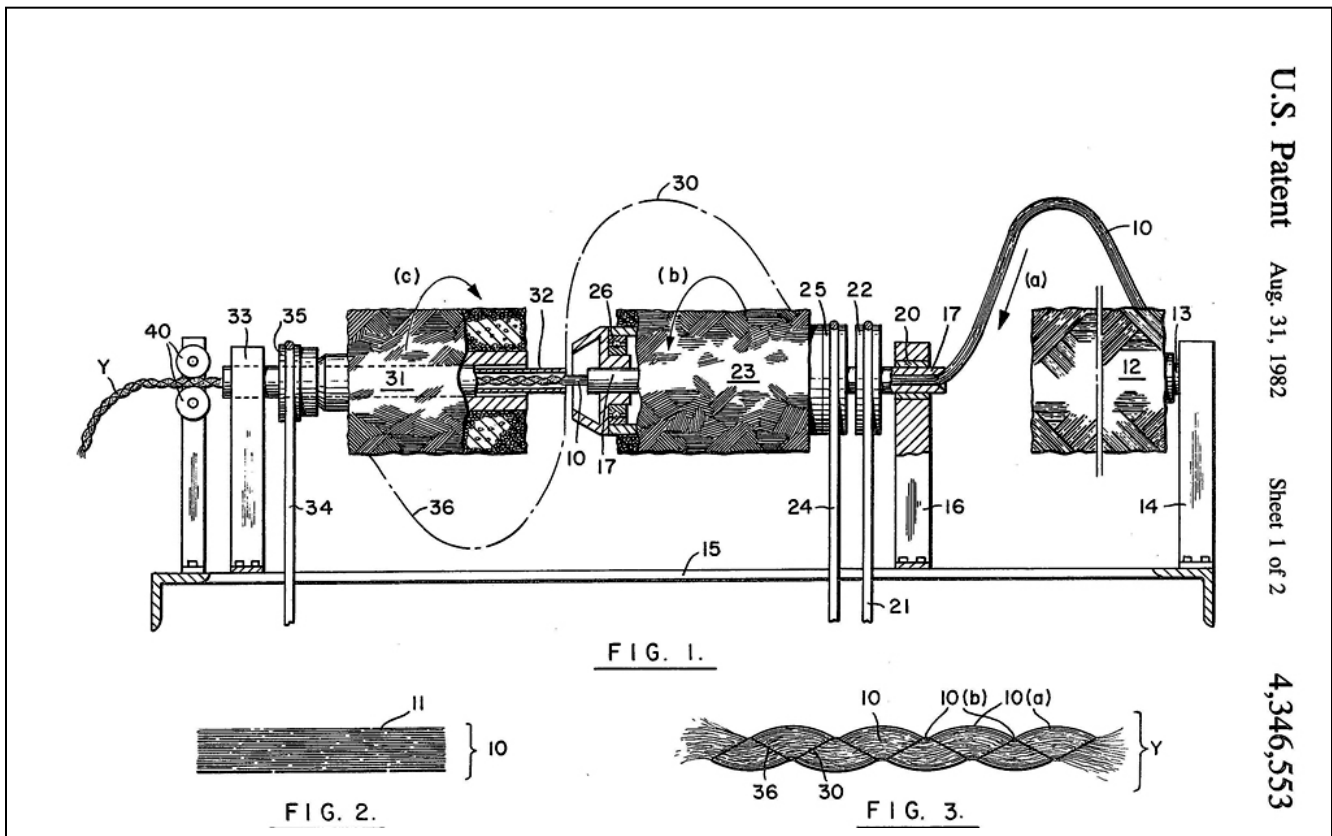




Softball yarn is combed. Combing and carding are two ways to prepare the raw fiber for spinning. In order to make yarn, the raw fibers need to be fluffed up and aligned prior to spinning. Carding creates a slightly fuzzier yarn as not as many of the fibers are aligned. Combing creates a smoother yarn as the fibers are more aligned. Combing is the more expensive process as you have higher waste involved than with carding.

In 1979, Lenore Propper Schwartz and Jonathan Propper started the Conshohocken Cotton Company, a manufacture of the patented Softball Yarn which was their trademark.

The patent was filed on 11/9/79 and was publication of patent US4346553A was issue on 8/31/83. Check out the full patent. <https://patents.google.com/patent/US4346553A/en>  
 Here is just one of the pages from the patent.





The anticipated expiration to this patent was 11/9/1999 and on 5/22/2019 the application of the patent status expired.

During the time they were in business, the Conshohocken Cotton Company sold two thicknesses that I know of .75 Softball yarn and 2.2 (Featherweight) Softball yarn. The 2.2 is about half the size of the .75 and would be great for 18 to 22 midges, scuds, and sow bugs. Softball yarn is a 3 ply yarn with two cotton threads winding and crossing the soft combed cotton. The process is called helically wrapped yarn. Conshohocken Cotton Company made apparel using this patented cotton yarn.



*The New York Magazine, January 26, 1981 reported that the Conshohocken Cotton Company: New year-round cottons manufactured in Pennsylvania. Battered, thick-thin Soft Ball, in a subtle color range, cost as low as \$3.50 per 3.8 ounce skein..... Now the price per ounce is \$3.50 and it is no longer made in the United States.*

Based on the original sample from Bob Gaston shop and this information, I know that Softball 100% combed cotton yarn was the yarn that Bob was buying but then in 2007, Proper closed or sold the Conshohocken Cotton Company. Before they closed, Bob bought up a supply of this yarn from them. Currently the yarn is not being made in the USA that I know of. The process is called helically wrapped yarn may not use cotton as the wrapping thread. Remember, this is 100% combed cotton yarn

If you know what you are looking for, you can still buy Vintage Conshohocken Cotton Company Softball yarn on Ebay. Do you remember when I purchased all the Glamour Madeira thread, well I have for the last year and a half been buying this Softball yarn. I currently have 23 colors in the .75 thickness and 17 colors in the 2.2 thickness. I have spent over \$1,000.00 maybe closer to \$1,200.00 and yes, I too have made some bad purchase. I remember what Al Bourisaw said, although one of the original 25 patterns, it has been removed from that group because of the difficulty in finding tying material. If you are lucky enough to find the material, buy a lot. I have been buying a lot and in addition to the original color pale yellow, I have bought other colors, tried them and they catch fish.

The yarn is great to tie with and the different colors catch fish. Now maybe Al will add it back in the top 25 patterns.

It is a perfect fly to have beginners tie. They will love all the colors that are available. You can teach them the jam knot, laying down a thread base, tying down the material, doing a pitch wrap, palmering the yarn to the front, tying off the yarn, whip finishing, cutting out unwanted threads. They can be creative using different color combinations. Maybe patriots fly using the red, blue and white. Or bees fly, using black and yellow. It is one of the easiest flies to tie. Then take them fishing and it is a fly that catches fish. This yarn is a great substitute for chenille.

If you are interested, I made up packages of this vintage yarn for each color and have them for sale. Currently, I have 26 colors for the .75 thickness and 26 colors for the 2.2 thickness. I am offering 52 packages for a very special piece (\$15.00 starter kit). Maybe I can encourage some of our local fly shops to have this material on hand for sale. The .75 Softball yarn will have seven feet of yarn in a package and the 2.2 Softball yarn will have nine feet in a package. This way I might

be able to get some of my investment back and you can try this fly out for yourself. But better yet, I bring back a classic pattern that has gone missing for years.

I would like you to get one of each color to try but a must is the 8 colors: White, Natural, Natural and Brown, Chamois, Pale yellow, Olive, Peach, Rose Blush, Hot Pink and Gray. We have caught fish on these colors.

But, think of the colors that have caught fish for you in the past. I am sure that using these materials for the Bed Spread fly or in another fly combination, you will have results.

Patti Hayes was telling me about a fly that was used in Roaring River many years ago. The fly was olive marabou with a muster head. She thinks that using the olive material that we have for the Bed Spread Fly and paint the heads a muster color would work just as well. Now let me think, and start mixing powder paint. To make muster color I need to mix Yellow and Red, Black and a little Green or is it Yellow and Red and more yellow?

Check out the colors for .75 thickness that I have acquired over the last 2 ½ years.

They are White, Black, Charcoal, Natural, Natural & Brown, Lt. Brown, Brown, Olive, Chamois, Pale Yellow, Yellow, Peach, Rhubarb (Apricot), Rose Blush, Rosebud, Coral, Pink, Hot Pink, Red, Hot Red, Burgundy, Pale Lavender, Lt. Blue, Blue, Gray, Copper and Dark Blue. Total of 26 material packets.



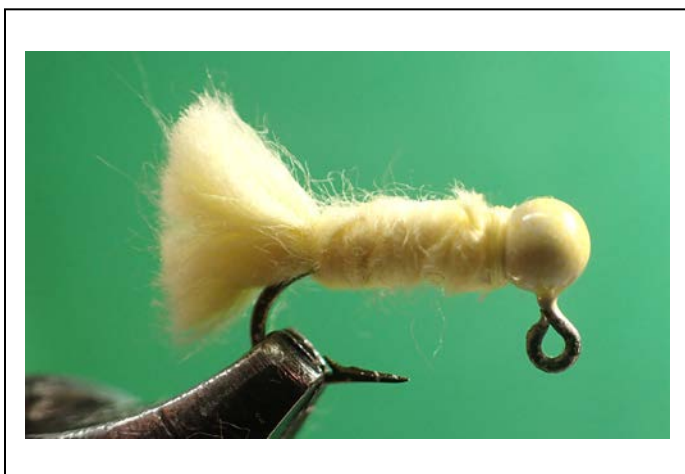


Check out the 22 colors for 2.5 thickness that I have acquired over the last 2 ½ years.

They are Natural, Natural & Brown, Black, Charcoal, Silver, Lemon, Pale Yellow, Dark Brown, Coco Brown, Brown, Mahogany, Rusty Brown, Dark Olive, Medium Olive, Olive, Khaki, Purple, Pale Lavender, Lt. Blue, Navy, Red, Multi-color, Dark Gray, Gray, Lime and FL. Green. Total of 26 material packets.



The original Bed Spread Fly recipe.



## Materials

Hook: TMC403BLJ with 1/100oz lead or a standard 90 degree jig hook with 1/100 oz lead was the original hook used

Hook sizes: 8, 10, 12, 14 and 16

Head: Light Yellow or Cream (hand or powder paint).

Thread: UNI-Thread 8/0 Lt. Cahill, Cream

Body and Tail: Bed Spread Material Softball 100% Combed Cotton Yarn (this is the original yarn used by Bob Gaston) and the color was a pale or light yellow.

The fly above was both tied with a size 12 hook.

Note: I tie this fly up in different colors and all you need to do is paint the lead head the color of the Softball yarn color you are using. Match the thread color also.

The original fly was tied on a standard 90 degree eye jig hook and you can find micro jig hooks at your local fly shop. I like the Tiemco TMC403BLJ hook with the wide gap and 60 degree. I pour my own lead on these but you could use a brass bead and add a little lead wire behind the bead or use tungsten slotted or unslotted bead. The 90 degree is easier to powder paint than the 60 degree but painting is an option. Both are a size 12. Unpainted will catch fish with this material.



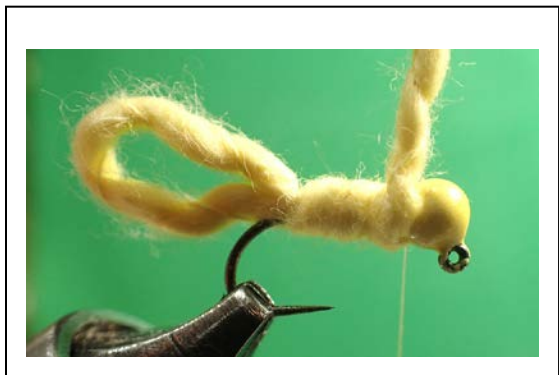
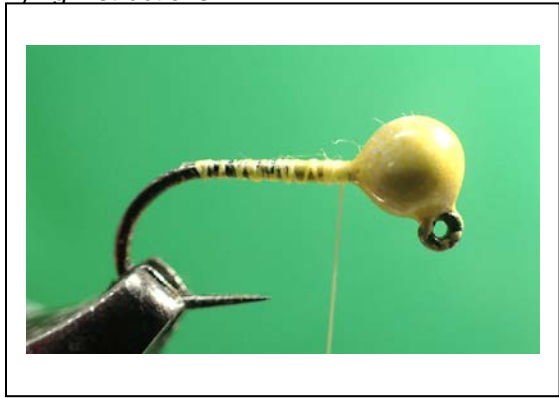
The gap between the eye and the point of the hook on the 90 degree jig hook is 4.4mm while the gap on the 60 degree jig hook is 6.6mm or almost 60% more. This will give you better hook ups.



The above picture shows why I favor the Tiemco TMC402BLJ which is the top row. They are barbless with a wide gap. With the wide gap, the size 14 on the Tiemco is the same gap you get on a size 12 - 90 degree hook. I like to have the heads painted and you can hand paint them with acrylics from Wal-Mart or powder paint them.



Tying Instructions:

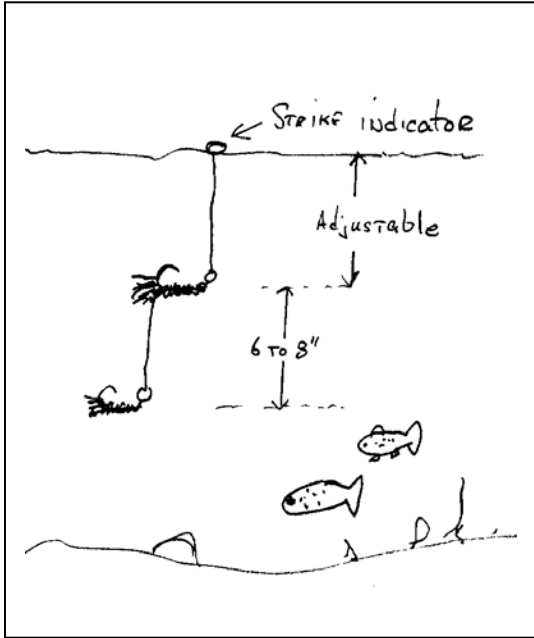


Tying the fly up to this point is easy. Now you have to find the 4 thread wraps that hold the soft combed cotton yarn together. After tying with it, I now see what someone said that Bob Gaston cut the cotton threads (4 of them) out or the tail.

You can also watch a fly tying video on YouTube. Here is the link - <https://youtu.be/qBN12wDt1Yc>



Fishing instructions: The Bed Spread is usually fished under an indicator and I like to have a second fly as a dropper of the Bed Spread fly. I tie a small size 18 1/180 oz Bed Spread fly but a size 18 -20 midge, Dorsey's top secret midge, and a harvester midge will also work well. The main Bed Spread fly is an attracter and the fish will usually take the smaller. This is what Mike Kidd found out. He and Ron were fishing on Taneycomo. They used the Bed Spread fly as an attracter with one of their favorite midges as a dropper off the Bed Spread Fly. The trout would swim up open their mouth like they were getting ready to take the Bed Spread fly but it was the midge they would take. Once Mike and Ron realized what was happening. When they saw the mouth open, they would set the hook. They caught 60 trout that day.



I was one how never tied on a dropper off my main fly because it would get tangled. Then Alex told me that he only ties the dropper about 6 but no more than 8 inches off the main fly. I tried it and it works. Carolyn or Gina at River Run Outfitter told a group of us, by tying on a dropper off the main fly doubles your chances of catching a fish.

I like the little foam stick on strike indicators but they are hard to move up or down the line if you need to make adjustments to your depth. Believe it or not, just one of those was floating with a 1/100 and 1/180 oz jig Bed spread fly on. A better option is the mini bobbers that can be easily adjusted.

Here are just a couple of fishing reports. **First**, Phillip Austin went to Bennett Springs and while he was getting his gear on, he watch two fishermen and they were not catching fish. They moved down stream and Phillip took over their spot. He immediately started catching fish. The two fishermen who were watching asked what he was using, he said the Bed Spread Fly. **Second**, one of our MSU Students went to Bennett Springs the following weekend and with his cousin and uncle caught over 60 fish on the Bed Spread Fly. **Third**, the final class for the MSU basic fly fishing is at Roaring River. That Saturday the water was high from all the rain and repairs were taken place at the hatchery. Larry was going to call off the fishing part of the class but the students wanted to try out what they had learned. We had 13 students and I had tied up 72 of the size 12 Bed Spread fly 1/100 oz in White, Natural, Natural and Brown, Chamois, Pale yellow and Rose Blush. And had 32 Bed Spread Flies tied on a size 18 1/180 oz in the same colors.

We fished like the drawing above and the 13 students caught over 200 trout in less than three hours. One student caught two trout, one on the upper fly and one on the lower fly. Another student even caught a sucker. The fly works.

**Forth**, Alex Swarts (Plateau Fly Shop) was fishing the North Fork with his buddies. They had caught a few fish, but nothing was working well. Then Alex put on a Bed Spread Fly and started catching fish. Yes, you better have more than on in our fly box because you will have to share. The following week they went fishing the Niangua and the same thing happened. **Fifth**, the last is from Bob Randall. He was fishing Bennett Springs and watched a man across from him by the whistle bridge catching trout one right after another. Finally, Bob had to ask him, what fly are you using? You know the answer, the bed spread fly. Bob found on in his fly box and put it on. Then Bob started catching one trout after another until he lost his only Bed Spread Fy.

You can also watch a fly tying video on YouTube. Here is the link - <https://youtu.be/qBN12wDt1Yc>

The Softball yarn has a special look when it is used to make bed spread, sweaters, hats, and scarfs.



# Fly in my Email Dennis Stead



## Bed Spread Fly – Bob Gaston

2/22/2020

Al Bourisaw in his article Twenty-Five Best Flies for Missouri Parks and Streams talked about the Bed Spread Fly. Al said, The Bread Spread was first tied by Bob Gaston of Gaston's Fly and Gun Shop located just outside of Bennett Springs Park. I have found that vintage materials used for this fly and it is call Softball 100%, 3 ply combed cotton. Currently I have over 25 colors. The original light yellow works well but so do a number of other colors. This is one of my favorites.



Put a thread base down and tie on material.



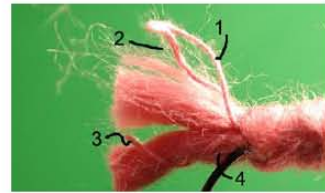
Form a loop in the material and secure the material with 4 turns of the thread. Lift up material and move your thread forward



Wind your material forward, tie off and whip finish. Cut the loop about the width of the gape or wider.



Look closely at the two pieces of material that make up the tail. There are 4 threads that need to be removed. Remove them.



Fluff out the tail, add a little of Dave's Flex cement and you are done. Try other colors Lt. Yellow, White, Natural, Chamois, Peach, Olive, Rose, Pink, and others.

Let me know what you think.  
[dmstead@aol.com](mailto:dmstead@aol.com)



Bed Spread Fly

### BED SPREAD FLY

#### Materials:


Hook: Micro Jig with 1/100 oz lead or TMC403BLJ with 1/100 oz lead  
Hook sizes: 8, 10, 12, 14, and 16  
Head: Light Salmon (The head on these fly were powder painted. I add white to salmon )  
Thread: UTC 70 or 140, color to match material.  
Body and Tail: Bed Spread Material (This is Vintage Softball 100% combed Cotton yarn, 3 ply)  
See fly tying YouTube Video:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qBN12wDt1Yc&t=125s>

Fishing instructions: Dead Drift with a strike indicator using this fly as the first fly (attractor fly). Tie a dropper fly (your favorite) as the second fly off the Bed Spread Fly.


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Also check out our MTFa web site for other articles you may missed. Click on the following to get there:  
<http://www.mtfa-springfield.org/resources/library/pdf-downloads/>

So just recently, Lion Brand came out with Softball yarn. But there is a major difference. The original as you know by now, is 100% combed cotton yarn, while Lion Brand is 100% Polyester. The polyester will not absorb water like the cotton will. And there is just something different about the original in the water. The fish are attracted to it.

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### Lion Brand Yarn 141-157 Softball Yarn, Hornets (Pack of 3 skeins)

Condition: **New**






Quantity:  More than 10 available

Price: **US \$17.97** [Buy It Now](#) [Add to cart](#) [Add to Watchlist](#)

**Free shipping** 30-day returns Ships from United States

Shipping: **FREE** Standard Shipping | [See details](#)  
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#### Item specifics

Condition:	New: A brand-new, unused, unopened, undamaged item (including handmade items). See the seller's ... <a href="#">Read more</a>	Shape:	Skein
Weight:	5 - Bulky/Craft	Length:	83 yd/76 m
Color:	Yellow	Fiber Content:	100% Polyester
Brand:	Lion Brand	Country/Region of Manufacture:	China
Suitable For:	Knit, Accessories - Gloves/Mittens, Accessories - Hats, Accessories - Socks, Apparel/Textil, Baby/Toddler, Blankets/Throws, Crafts, Crochet	Style:	Bulky
Unit of Sale:	Pack/Set	Skein / Ball Weight:	3.5 oz/100 g
UPC:	842093120841		