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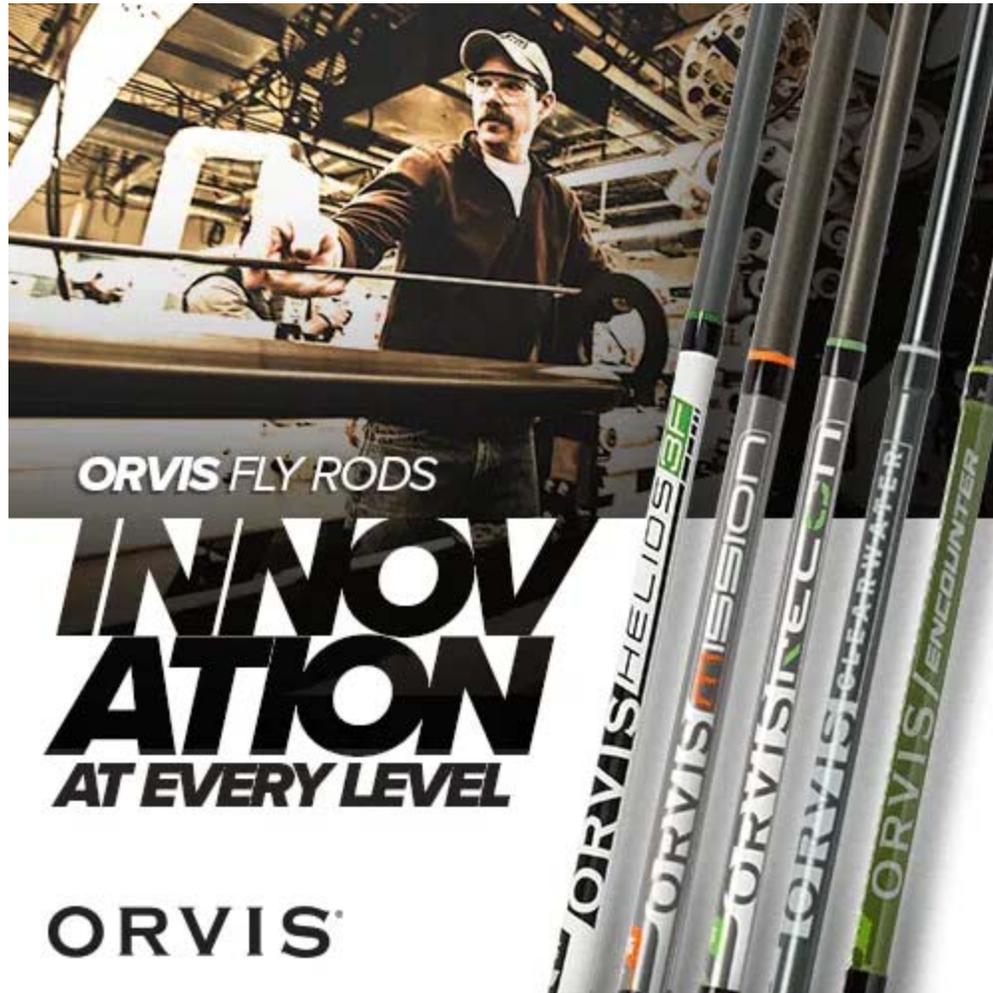


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The TB Yarn Indy Hack

by [Domenick Swentosky](#) | Mar 12, 2023 | [24 comments](#)



*** NOTE ** This Troutbitten article relies and builds upon many articles that have come before it. Find and follow the article links below as they appear in orange. They are significant chapters of knowledge that precede this one.*

— — — — —

All fishing casts are about weight. Throw your Daredevil spoon by the tree stump. Tie on a Jitterbug and plop it near the lily pads. Fire your Zoo Cougar to the undercut, send your drop shot, split shot or tungsten bead along with the Pheasant Tail or . . . cast that Royal Wulff off the inside of a foam line.

It's all about weight, whether that be the metal of lead, tungsten or brass, whether it's soft plastic, hard plastic or a fly line itself. Weight does the work.

Fly anglers presenting nymphs have a key choice to make from the start. Indicator or tight line? Having the skill to fish both styles opens up water and fishing opportunities that are otherwise missed or skipped over. And there are major advantages to fishing indicators, just as there are times that a tight line presentation cannot be beat.

[READ: Troutbitten | Nymphing: Tight Line vs Indicator](#)

Combining these two styles is another option. And the hybrid system of tight line to the indicator brings together some of the best advantages from each style.

[READ: Troutbitten | Tight Line Nymphing With an Indicator](#)

Weight of the Indy

I daresay most anglers don't think about weight when choosing an indicator. Holding a Thingamabobber or an Air Lock in your hand doesn't feel like much. But our brain does a strange bit of magic there. Because a *small* Airlock weighs more than a #12 Walt's Worm with a 3.5 mm bead.



Crazy, isn't it?

The weight of the indy matters because it becomes part of the *cast*. And all of the sudden, we must adjust our stroke and our approach to accommodate that weight.

[READ: Troutbitten | Your Indicator is too Big](#)

In truth, the weight of an indicator can provide an advantage. It helps carry the leader and fly to the target, providing distance and cutting through resistance on a breezy day. Weight does good work in these situations.

But for decades, nymphing anglers have intuitively understood the advantage of choosing an indicator that weighs less . . . or weighs next to nothing. Hence, the popularity of yarn indicators.

[READ: Troutbitten | The Dorsey Yarn Indicator — Everything You Need to Know, and a Little More](#)

Yarn is the lightest option for a suspender. Cork, foam and even a dry fly all weigh more than a small piece of yarn that is elegantly attached with a rubber band or a thin rubber tube.

Long ago, I fell in love with a yarn indicator system that I learned in a short video on [the Blue Quill Angler website](#). It featured Pat Dorsey, a chunk of macrame yarn, and an orthodontic rubber band.

What we at Troutbitten have affectionately called the Dorsey has undergone a few changes over the years. I use less yarn, two colors for better visibility and smaller bands. I pre-bunch the yarn at my tying desk with minimal wraps of [8/0 Uni-Thread](#), and sometimes . . . just once in a while . . . I add a small piece of split shot to the line above the indy. Wait, what?



Photo by Aiden Swentosky

What the Hell is That?

Confusion and some chuckling is the response from everyone whom I've shown this trick.

It's a hack. Adding a small amount of weight is a way around one of the only downsides of a yarn indy. Because sometimes, even a small amount of yarn provides too much air resistance to the cast. This is especially and most frequently a trouble when fishing [tight line to the indicator style \(mentioned above\)](#). Because without the weight of a traditional fly line to punch the leader, yarn and fly to the target, we rely on the mass of the leader itself. We rely on [a good casting stroke](#). And we rely on the weight of the fly. But sometimes, none of that is enough.

Enter the TB yarn indy hack . . .

By adding just a bit of weight, the air resistance issue is overcome. I use a [#8 or #6 split shot](#). I place it above the TB Yarn (toward the rod tip) and right next to it.

The questions running through your head now are probably the same as the questions I had when I first thought of this hack.

Does the Yarn Sink?

No. Basically, if the yarn can support 75 cg underneath, then it can probably support 75 cg next to it, right? This makes sense. However, I rarely use any shot larger than #6 (10 cg), because it isn't necessary.

Does that split shot change the performance of the yarn?

Yes, but just a tiny bit.

One of the great advantages of yarn as an indy is how supremely sensitive it is. Yarn is nimble on the water and rides high. The points of the fibers quiver and jiggle at the slightest take or contact underneath. Adding weight beside the yarn deadens that response, but not by much. Give it a try and see for yourself.



Photo by Aiden Swentosky

Does the added weight cause a splash?

No. The yarn acts like a parachute to soften the landing of the shot beside it.

Why not choose a bobber?

Bobbers and other hard indys have their own advantages, and I would never be without them on the water. But this hack allows me to use yarn and all its unique qualities while also overcoming the occasional issue of air resistance.



The Perfect Indy (almost). Photo by Aiden Swentosky

When and Where?

The TB Yarn hack is one of those strange DIY solutions that will never go mainstream. It's too odd. Also, some people don't carry split shot, and they probably won't start carrying it, just to

pinch it on above a piece of yarn once in a while.

The TB Yarn is my favorite indy, by far. And I use it as my go to [suspender](#) solution whenever I can. With this yarn hack, the range of situations where yarn is my best choice is expanded. That small split shot solves a lot of problems.

I still use hard indys, like Thingamabobbers, to cut through more wind or gain more distance. And I use them to suspend flies in rough water that would sink the best yarn.

I've been using this hack for well over a decade, and I employ it most for summer nymphing or in low, clear water where I should stay back another five or ten feet from spooky trout. Summer fly patterns in my rivers are often smaller too. So lighter flies at longer distances can be a real challenge while I'm on [a Mono Rig](#). Floating the sighter is a good solution, but an indy is often better. In these conditions, the landing of a bobber can send trout darting for cover. I could use a dry-dropper rig, but I would lose the ability to slide that suspender and make quick adjustments. So yarn is my best choice, but the minimal weight needed for small nymphs and low water isn't enough to overcome the air resistance of yarn.

The hack of adding a single, small split shot is the smart solution.

It works. Give it a try.

Fish hard, friends.

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Domenick Swentosky

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Hi. I'm a father of two young boys, a husband, author, fly fishing guide and a musician. I fish for wild brown trout in the cool limestone waters of Central Pennsylvania year round.

This is my home, and I love it. Friends. Family. And the river.



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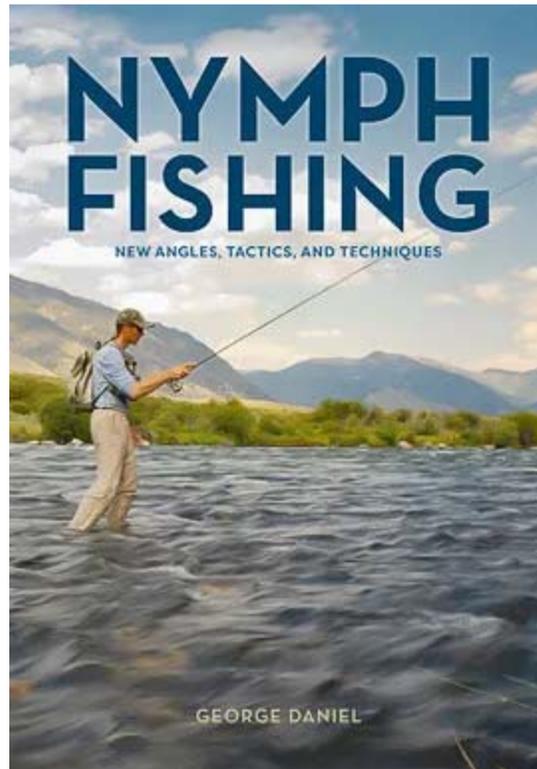
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Be part of the Troutbitten community of ideas.
Be helpful. And be nice.

24 Comments

greg on March 13, 2023 at 10:17 am

This is total genius and I'm kicking myself that I didn't think of it myself. The problems you outlined are the main reasons I don't like to fish the Dorsey in certain situations and I know already this will solve them without even fishing it yet.

[Reply](#)

Domenick Swentosky on March 13, 2023 at 10:22 am

Right on

[Reply](#)

Fritz on March 13, 2023 at 10:31 am

Your article is timely as I am in the process of making a few "yarn" indicators with McFlyon, a polypropylene material that comes in strands to double up as wing posts for my parachute flies. I use 3/16" dental rubber bands for binding.

[Reply](#)

Bill Anderson on March 13, 2023 at 10:32 am

Great idea! I'll try it. One thing tho . You forgot to say that the yarn must be Polypropylene., not acrylic, wool other fiber. It's the only available material that is less dense than water. I use polypropylene exclusively for wings on my CET dry fly patterns.

Bill

[Reply](#)

Domenick Swentosky on March 13, 2023 at 10:42 am

Hi Bill. Thanks!

Respectfully, I did not forget the discussion of yarn types. I purposely left it out here, because it is covered in the dedicated article, linked above that is all about the yarn Indy. That's why this article starts with the message it does.

Long ago, I realized that these articles must all build, like chapters in a book. Otherwise, I would spend all my time rehashing and setting things up that I've already talked about.

None of the articles on Troutbitten stand alone. And the articles I link throughout a piece are almost considered required reading.
Cheers!

[Reply](#)

Bob M on March 13, 2023 at 11:15 am

Re: "I could use a dry-dropper rig, but I would lose the ability to slide that suspender and make quick adjustments."

Just wondering if this comment means you're no longer/scarcely using the sliding dry dropper rig you outlined in your "A Slidable Dry Dropper System" article. I discovered it recently, and was planning to use it on smaller brookie streams where depths can vary a good bit from pool to pool.

[Reply](#)

Domenick Swentosky on March 13, 2023 at 9:07 pm

Good question, Bob!

That slidable dry dropper system that I wrote about is still in my rotation, for sure. And it is a good option in the summer conditions that I described. However, there are also times, like winter, when water may be low and clear as well, and there is almost zero chance of these trout rising to any dry fly the size of #16 or larger. So I would use the system laid out above. There are also times in the summer, when this is the best option. It's all conditional, and it can come down to personal choice or how you like to set things up to.

Thanks for asking about that.

Cheers.

Dom

[Reply](#)

Steve Tkachuk on March 13, 2023 at 12:22 pm

Dom THIS is freaking awesome! I have learned so much from you over the years, this hack will be a UUUUge solution to a legitimate problem as you outlined. So 10-12 cg is really all you need eh ? Thanks !

[Reply](#)

Domenick Swentosky on March 14, 2023 at 8:26 pm

Cheers. Glad you connect, man.

[Reply](#)

Matt Bernet on March 13, 2023 at 1:31 pm

This is great! I shy away from indicators a lot of time because plastic is too heavy and conspicuous and the yarn is too light and resistance. I will definitely try this solution!

Thanks Dom!

Matt

P.S.

Have you seen or tried the GhostTech indicators? They look promising but I haven't taken the plunge yet. Just curious if you had any thoughts.

[Reply](#)

Domenick Swentosky on March 13, 2023 at 2:54 pm

Hi Matt. Good stuff.

And yes, I've used Ghost Tech. I'm a bigger fan of this yarn and Thingamabobbers, both.

[Reply](#)

Craig Lightburn on March 14, 2023 at 6:38 am

Will the splitshot slide with the indy, for depth adjustment?

[Reply](#)

Domenick Swentosky on March 14, 2023 at 11:13 am

Yes. Absolutely.

[Reply](#)

Joshua Herchelroth on March 14, 2023 at 10:04 pm

Dom, have you ever discussed how you attach your thingamabobber? I do enjoy using a Dorsey and look forward to giving this a try.

[Reply](#)

Domenick Swentosky on March 15, 2023 at 9:16 pm

I'm sure I'll get to it. I've purposely never shared it, because it doesn't work for everyone. Some of my friends don't like my Thingamabobber hack at all. You have to want it to work and be willing to accept the occasional failure.

David Christiansen on March 13, 2023 at 5:01 pm

Do you place the indicator on your leader or your tippet?

Thanks

[Reply](#)

Domenick Swentosky on March 13, 2023 at 9:04 pm

To me it's all the leader, but I know what you mean. The indy goes below the sighter, on the tippet section of my leader. This is because I don't want any taper under the water. Ideally, it's all one diameter, or at the most, two diameters of tippet.

Follow the article links above for a lot more information about all of that.

Cheers.

Dom

[Reply](#)

Scott Miller on March 13, 2023 at 6:00 pm

Outstanding!

Of all the things I try to execute this is THE ONE, given any wind, where the frustration outweighs the goal. I can't wait to try this.

Much appreciated Dom!

[Reply](#)

Domenick Swentosky on March 13, 2023 at 9:03 pm

Right on. Good luck on the water.

[Reply](#)

Scott Miller on March 17, 2023 at 7:43 pm

What a huge difference! It worked great and that Dorsey lands like a butterfly with sore feet. Thanks again.

Scott

[Reply](#)

Domenick Swentosky on March 19, 2023 at 9:19 pm

Nice

[Reply](#)

Bryan K. on March 14, 2023 at 4:34 pm

This is such a great hack, and something I never would've thought of on my own.

Casting with a yarn indicator at distance is always a problem for me, so I usually use a foam indicator. Will be trying your hack this weekend.

Thank you for sharing!

[Reply](#)

Domenick Swentosky on March 14, 2023 at 8:24 pm

Right on. It's impactful, for sure.

[Reply](#)

Tyler S on March 14, 2023 at 8:04 pm

Aiden killin it on the lens!

[Reply](#)

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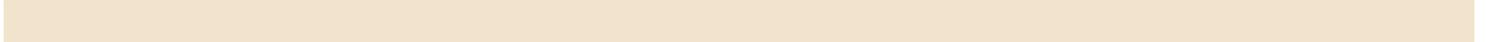
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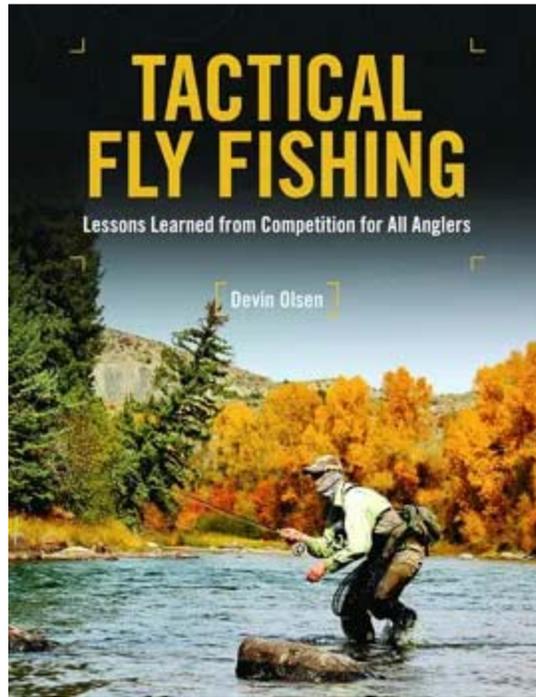
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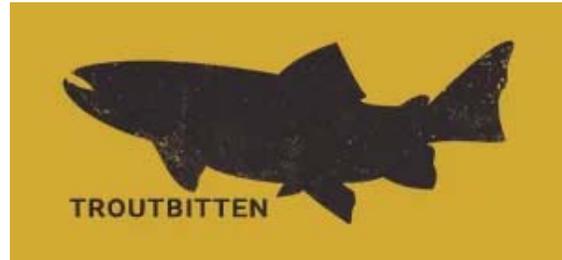
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