

MAKING “ROADRUNNER” JIGS

(By TubeDude)

The Blakemore Company designed and patented the Roadrunner jig head a long time ago. The addition of a small spinner blade to a lead head jig was a great enhancement. The vibration and flash of a spinner blade appeal to both the visual and hearing senses of most fish. They create a “reaction” bite in inactive fish, and generate fierce strikes from actively feeding ones.

I use Roadrunner jigs both for fishing a variety of plastic baits and for making marabou jigs and “bait bugs”. Different styles, sizes and colors occupy a significant part of my arsenal on every fishing trip. On some excursions, these bladed jigs account for a high percentage of all the fish I catch, of several species. In fact, over the years, in fresh water and salt, I have probably taken somewhere near a hundred different species on some form of Roadrunner jig.

Roadrunner jigs are slightly more difficult to make than regular lead heads. They include the addition of a small crane swivel, during the pouring process, and a split ring and spinner blade after being painted...and dressed, if you are making feather jigs or bait bugs. You will need manual dexterity, good vision and a lot of patience. However, once you learn the steps, and train your eyes and hands to perform them, it becomes much easier.

The Blakemore Company retains a patent on their creation. They allow the making of “pony style” heads, but not the commercial use of them. In other words, you can buy jig head molds and make your own, but you can’t sell them...especially as the trademarked name “Roadrunners”.

There are two types of molds available for pouring these unique heads. One style includes a barbed “collar”, to hold plastic twisters, tubes and trailers in place. The other has no collar. It is designed for use in making jigs and bait bugs.

You can get by with only one type of mold, even if you use them for both applications, but you will need to make modifications for the second type of use. If you buy a mold with barbed collars, you can cut off the collar with a pair of “gate shears”, to leave a smooth hook shank for tying on your chenille, feathers, etc. If you buy the more compact head version, without the collar, you can still fish plastics on them. The only problem is that the plastic tends to slip down on the smooth shank of the hook, unless you tie and cement a thread “bump” on the shank, to provide resistance.

I own both types of Roadrunner molds, and use both styles of the heads. Most of my fresh water fishing incorporates the use of light spinning tackle, and I seldom use a jig head larger than 1/8 ounce. I probably use 1/16-ounce heads, on size 2 or 4 hooks, more than all other sizes combined. I do use the 1/32-ounce size a lot, especially when casting into shallow water or when I need a light “finesse” touch in vertical jigging them.

The 1/8 and 1/4 ounce Roadrunners are employed mostly for deep water (over fifteen feet) and for larger fish...such as walleye, largemouth, stripers, wipers, etc. The larger sizes are also great for many inshore species in the salt...both with plastics and as bait bugs. Again, the addition of flash and vibration really improve results over plain old lead head jigs.

I have made and used Roadrunners up to 1.5 ounces, on hooks as large as 6/0. The heavier models are ideal for deep water jigging, both in fresh water and salt. Big lake trout love a Roadrunner, with a plastic tube or grub and a piece of fish meat attached. In the salt, you can fill a boat with different bottom fish and reef dwellers. Similarly, you decorate them with plastic or feathers and then a piece of squid or fish flesh.

Owning your own molds allows you to experiment and custom design Roadrunners to suit exactly the type of fish you seek and the type of fishing you will be doing. When you buy “off the rack” at a tackle store, you are limited to the combinations of head weights and hook sizes they sell. In effect, they peddle a “one-size-fits-all” product...relying on the typical fishermen not being knowledgeable enough to know the difference.

It is virtually impossible to buy light heads on larger hooks. But, there are many situations in which even big bass, walleyes, stripers and other fish want a slow drop or a finesse presentation. You can't get that with a heavy head, even though you usually have to buy the heavier heads to get the size hooks you need to serve up the plastics or baits you wish to throw.

On the other end of the spectrum, you sometimes need a heavier head and a smaller hook. A good example would be when you are fishing for perch, beneath the ice, in over thirty feet of water. It takes forever for typical 1/64 ounce “ice fly” to reach the feeding zone...just above the bottom. You need the small size, but the fish don't care much about how fast you get it down to them. You will be able to save a lot of fishing time by using an 1/8 ounce head on a size 6 hook, and except for rare “touch fishing” situations, you will catch just as many fish on the larger heads.

STEP BY STEP

MATERIALS AND TOOLS NEEDED:

- Lead melting/pouring equipment
- Jig mold...with or without collar
- Soft lead...do not use recycled tire weights (harder alloys of lead)
- Jig hooks...Eagle Claw #575 or #630 (Heavy duty, longer shank)
- Crane swivels...size 10 or 12 for most small freshwater jigs
- Split rings...size 0 or 1 for most spinner blades (Size 00 is too small and impractical)
- Spinner blades...sizes 00 (smallest) to 5 for most freshwater jigs. Use size 00 for 1/32 oz., size 0 for 1/16 oz. regular and larger to balance other sizes of heads and hooks. Choice of colors and styles. Hammered nickel and brass in Colorado or Indiana style are good choices.
- Gate shears...a cutting tool for trimming off excess lead “sprues” and burrs on heads.
- Protective goggles and good ventilation

PROCEDURES:

1. Melt lead to appropriate pouring temperature.
2. Put hooks and crane swivels in jig mold slots.
3. Close two halves of jig mold slowly, to assure tight fit and to prevent dislodging of hooks or swivels before pouring. (Mold will not close flush if hook/swivel unseated.)
4. Pour lead into proper opening...quickly and cleanly...being careful not to splash or over-pour lead.
5. Quickly remove hardened jig heads into metal container...on non-burning surface.
6. Continue pouring until you have desired quantity in your batch.
7. Using gate shears, remove sprues and other burrs or pouring “glitches”.
8. Paint the heads and add eyes, if desired. Finish with epoxy clear coat, being careful not to get paint or epoxy into swivel parts.
9. “Dress” jigs with body and tails, if not to be used with plastics.
10. Add split rings and spinner blades as last step.