

The Serious Tackle Box

Experienced Fishing Advice To
Make Fishing Great Again

With Chris Gonzales

Skirted Slow Pitch and Butterfly Jigs

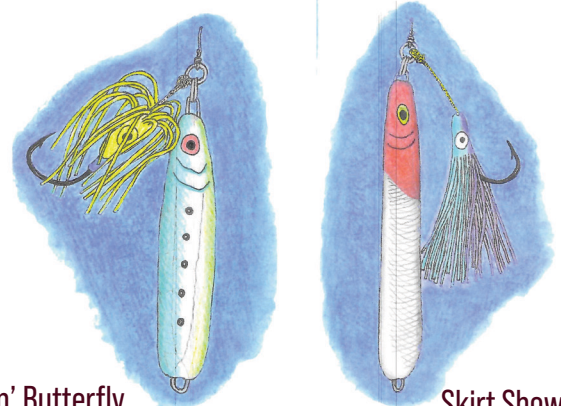
Skirted and Dancin' butterflies are a variation of an old rigging technique and a new reversed application I came up with a few months ago. The first variation is to place a soft plastic squid skirt in the normally used orientation on the shank of an assist hook on a butterfly-type vertical jig. This skirt in use evolved from them being used on the trailing treble hook of Diamond jigs over ten years ago. That use sort of faded over the years but made a comeback. You would be surprised at the number of rigging innovations that I have accumulated over the years. The use of these soft plastic squid skirts on the assist hooks of butterfly-type jigs, either in their normal use orientation or reversed, as far as I know, started last fall when I first rigged some up that way.

A soft plastic squid-skirted assist hook adds to that vulnerable, occupied, distressed look of a butterfly-type jig. Their appearance is now the look of a small fish (the jig) frantically chasing a smaller target (the skirted assist hook). The total look is a strike trigger to any predator that eats small, live fish...it's a prime target. The soft skirt in the normal position on the assist hook, pointed end toward the hook eye, looks to be a small fish or squid trying to escape an attack; the assist hook, with its soft skirt reversed, pointed end toward the hook bend, has the appearance of a school of small fish trying to avoid the jig's attack. These skirts work on "J" type hooks and circle hooks alike.

To place the skirt on a hook, the first consideration is to remember any of these hooks will readily hook you as well as fish. To get the reversed skirt on the assist hook, I first snip the pointed end as short as possible and still have a very small hole showing. Now, carefully work the skirt over and around the hook point and bend; moisten the shrink tubing on the hook with saliva, pull the tight skirt over the tubing until the hook's portion is seated in the bottom of the skirts interior. If you are worried about the skirt slipping out of position when wet, a problem I haven't had, instead of the previously mentioned moistening, apply superglue gel to the tubing section over the hook eye and quickly snap into place. Placing a skirt on an assist hook in the normal position again starts with the skirts pointed end being snipped off as little as possible to end up with a small thru hole in the skirt. The steps I use for this skirt installation are to remove the assist hook and its cording from the solid ring after it is removed from the split ring. To pull the cording through the skirt will require you to tie a piece of needled thread, pull the cord, and seat the skirt against the shrink wrap-covered hook eye. Reattach the solid ring to the assist cord and the ring to the split ring and the installation is ready to fish. Those are the ways to install these soft plastic squid skirts that I use that work and it takes less time than it took to read this "how-to".



Skirted and Dancin' Butterflies



Dancin' Butterfly
with Reversed Skirt

Skirt Shown With
Usual Positioning

Soft plastic 4 1/2 squid skirts are available here at Serious Tackle in assorted colors of blue, green, purple, sparkle/glitter, and glow.

The butterfly-type vertical jigs I use from very near the surface to about 150 ft. or so down are in the 4-to-6-ounce range and in the neighborhood of 5 to 7 inches long. I've taken numerous species on an assortment of color patterns; it really doesn't seem to matter a lot. What I do recommend is that you look at any particular jig at boat side about 10 feet down for a look at its action that your particular rod puts on it as it's twitched. When doing this "look", be ready for a possible strike. I've had ling come up from under the boat on several occasions to hit a shallow-worked butterfly-type jig. These skirt additions will also work on those long, slim, and heavy vertical jigs normally used deep or when strong current flow dictates. Glow skirts work well at night or anytime when fishing deep at say 200-400 ft. depths, a glow portion on the jig body helps, too.

I recently saw where some have concerns about red shrink tubing on the assist cording and hook shank drawing strikes on the fall or when being worked that results in the leader being cut off. I can see this as possibly being a problem when kingfish, wahoo, or sharks are around ... something to think about if you make up your own assist hooks, or you could just add black or dark blue over the existing red shrink tubing. Using a cable leader about 12 inches long would also help in the cutoff category. Also, if you make up your own assist hooks, consider using 90# 49 strand cable. Pay close attention to using the right combination of cable, crimps, crimper, and crimping. When using any of the various cording assist hooks, periodically check fraying, cutting, regardless of the species targeted.

Virtually no stretch braids as your main line will telegraph strikes and give positive hooksets far beyond any mono-braid is the way to go with these butterfly-type vertical jigs.

These jigs are not only for vertical jigging, although this was their original use. Cast them far, sink, jig, wind, sink, jig, etc. through an arc. This works for targeting anything in the water column that eats live fish...pretty much anything swimming out there from suspended snappers to tuna. Work around any structure, your boat, production gas or oil platforms, wrecks, rocks, etc. They all attract predators such as kingfish, ling, wahoo, dolphin, grouper, and amberjack.

Circle hooks work well on these types of jigs too. As with any circle hook application, a medium-speed rod sweep, once the line comes tight or you wind it tight, is all that is needed to set the hook. Speaking of setting the hook, all my metal jigs have two circle assist hooks. The second hook gives a second chance for a hook-up, but it will always be only one hook in the fish. All my metal jigs have one "J" assist hook. The reason is that it's not uncommon for two "J" hooks to be in the fish, one in its mouth/jaw, the other somewhere in the side, bottom, or top of its head.

This "bridle effect" doesn't give you the control over the fish that's even close to when one hook is in its mouth/jaw. It takes longer to get a bridled fish to the gaff than a mouth-hooked one. This lack of control may let a fish get into a structure, tangle with other lines, etc... In my opinion, use one "J" and two "C" hooks on your butterfly-type metal jigs.

A common mistake I've seen on many occasions is where the fisherman has their line/leader tied when using these metal jigs. Always tie to the solid metal ring your assist hook/hooks are attached to. The primary purpose is to tie onto the most direct connection to the hook and fish. That's the solid metal ring to the assists cording and hook. The purpose of the split ring that connects the metal ring to the jig body is to be able to change out the jig body or to remove it for storage. Don't tie onto the jig body's wire end loop or the split ring. Tying on to the solid metal ring also gives the jig a bit more freedom of motion.

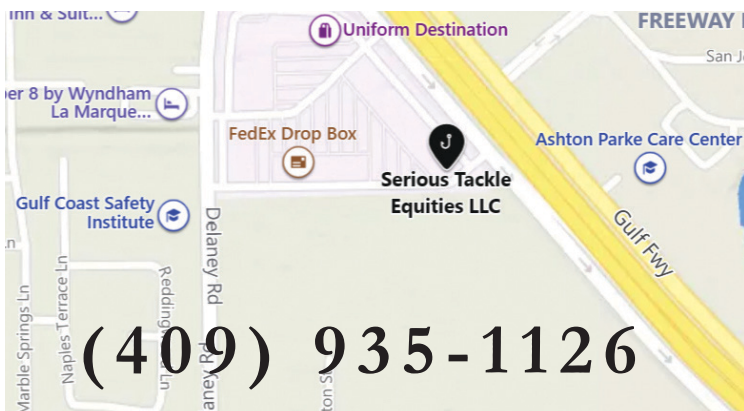
Adding these two soft plastic squid skirt options to your already effective butterfly-type metal jigs just adds to their strike attraction. Bring your skirted and dancin' butterflies to the offshore fishing dance and you will likely be partnered up more than usual!

If you have any questions, stop by Serious Tackle or email me at chris@serioustackle.com

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