



Bob's World

By Bob Davis, photos by Han Jie

Making A DIY Rattling Troller

Want to add a bit noise, fizz and sparkle to your trolling, for those days when nothing else seems to be working? Here's a simple way to create an effective and very low cost trolling lure with built-in rattle.

Next time you're in your local hardware store, get a tube roll of Selleys Knead-It and, while you're there, ask the attendant if it's okay to grab a couple of spare nozzles from the usual freebie basket next to the sealant tube section – you know, those tapered nylon nozzles that screw onto the ends of big tubes of silicon? As well, if you don't already have fishing wire at home, get a small roll of galvanized gardening wire – not too light and skinny, in case your lure gets hit by a monster, but light enough to be able to do tight coil wraps with the aid of pliers.

Sure, some purists might scoff – but this is meant to be a low cost DIY lure, and I've never had one of my gal lure wires fail on me yet. If the lure is ever lost to a fish, the gal wire will corrode away a heck of a lot quicker than stainless wire, relieving the fish of the painful burden of the lure sooner, and that's a good thing. Same logic applies to hooks – avoid stainless steel.

With these items in hand, you have the essentials to create your lure body. Other things you'll need are likely to already be in your tackle box, including a decent treble or single hook (your choice – but not stainless please), a strong swivel, a strong split ring or two, and some small split shot.

For the skirt for this trolling lure, you can of course always buy the material at your tackle shop – or you can just do the DIY thing and cut your own skirt out of the high-flash silver plastic liner from a wine carton.



Now you're ready. Cut an over-length section of the wire, maybe 25 centimetres long – to give yourself plenty of working scope. You can snip off the excess later. Make an end loop, taking care to get about 6 tight coil wraps in the wire, sweetly done to look like a compressed coil spring. This loop will be the hook end, to which you will add a split ring and connect your hook later. Pass the wire through the narrow end of the plastic nozzle. The end-loop coils should stop at the nozzle end.

A common sense safety warning here: if you have sensitivity to epoxy, wear rubber gloves. Cut off a small amount of Knead-It, work it with fingers to mix the two epoxy components, and shape it like a worm – this is so that you can hold the nozzle vertically and drop the epoxy paste down into it. Use the end of something like the blunt end of a kebab skewer to

carefully ram it down and create a plug around the wire. Try to arrange the wire as centrally as possible in the epoxy plug.

Here's where you need a bit of judgement. The idea of this plug is to create a rear end wall against which your small split-shot can bounce, to get your rattle effect. There needs to be sufficient space between the central wire, and the plastic side of the tapered nozzle so that the split-shot won't jam there. If in doubt, add some more epoxy paste until you're satisfied you've got sufficient plug surface to ensure that the split-shot will continue to be able to move freely.

Put it aside now, to allow the epoxy plug to set. In the next step, you will place a couple of split-shot into the nozzle, and it is important that you don't do that until the rear epoxy plug has set properly. During the next stage, you will need to keep the nozzle





Trolling Rattler body and skirt – note the head furrows, and the rear internal plug.

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positioned as you work so that the split shot do not make contact with the new epoxy for the head of the lure before it sets properly, else one or both of them may collect some of the epoxy and stick themselves together, or stick to the wire, or to the narrow rear end wall of their rattle chamber.

To start working on the head of the lure, cut off a good hunk of Knead-It, sufficient to create the head size and shape that you have in mind, and work it with your fingers until it reaches consistent colouring. Shape it into a rough head, and also create what will be a rearward flat surface. Place two split-shot into the plastic nozzle, hold the nozzle vertically, open-end-up, then push the flat surface of your epoxy mix over the large end of the nozzle, and work it down perhaps 10mm, endeavouring to keep the wire centred. The flat surface you created now becomes the inner front bouncing wall for your split-shot.

Work the outer surfaces of the epoxy down to cover the outside of the thread section of the nozzle, and a bit further down. Here you can add some furrows around the body, to help with later attachment of the skirt. A circumference furrow is easily done by pressing into the epoxy mix with the side of your kebab stick, and rolling the nozzle between your fingers – voila! I always create at least two furrows, only 3-4mm apart.

Shape the head as you desire it. You can make it like a bullet, or give it a flat cap that can be square or can have an offset angle (if you want the thing darting all over the place), or you can create a concave hollow to achieve a popper or blooper effect. Again, try to keep the wire centred in the face of the head as you create it. Make a hook with the free end of your wire, and

hang the lure vertically to allow the head to set. The Knead-It epoxy mix goes off pretty quickly.

Now's the time to give your fingers a really good scrub with soap - to remove any epoxy mix off your skin. Have a cuppa, throw the ball for your dog, or better still, take a half hour to talk to your family. Don't go back to the lure until the head has set to enable you to start cleaning up the shape, which is easily done with a fine wood rasp or finishing file, and then completing the job with some sandpaper.

To connect the skirt to the head, you could bind them in the usual way, but I use rubber O-rings! Well, synthetic rubber at least. Some years ago, the O-rings on the butt joiners of a couple of my baitcaster rods needed replacing – you know, on the fitting that slips into the pistol grip handle? So I scoured the hardware and auto spares shops and found a mixed handyman packet of O-rings of different sizes. In these mixed packs they only cost a few cents each. It took me about a nanosecond to recognise many other potential uses for rubber O-rings in fishing. It is no coincidence that, in subsequent times, when I make a lure head requiring a skirt, I have in mind a particular O-ring size when I shape the head, and create circumference furrows for retaining the skirt. It takes a bit of trial and error, but it's worth it because using strong elastic O-rings as skirt retainers is so, so easy!

When I use the plastic bladder bag from a wine carton to create a flashing skirt, I simply cut out a rectangle, wide enough to get the number of wraps I want around the head of the lure, and long enough to cover the lure and hook – plus a bit extra. Then I cut all the slits required to create the tassels for the skirt, leaving an evenly un-slit area at the top for wrapping and connecting to the head of the lure. For this

example, I've used sections from two different wine bladder bags, one with silver on both sides, the other with a silver inner but gold outer surface, to create two skirts. The under-skirt is created first, and will be retained by an O-ring on the aft furrow. The over-skirt will be retained by an O-ring positioned on the front furrow.

Wrap the skirt sections around the lure head, allowing the uncut section to protrude a little past the front face of the lure. There's method in this madness – it makes it easier to get the O-rings into position. Stretch the first O-ring onto the head, and roll it down to the aft retainer furrow. For a single skirt, you'd also add the second O-ring. To complete the skirt, carefully fold back the uncut section of the skirt material that was allowed to protrude past the front face of the lure, bringing the fold-back neatly aft. The O-rings are now concealed.

This lure is designed to have a hook tail. I like to use 'FisHair' for tails because, even though it's a synthetic hair, it grabs air on any surface break and leaves a fizzing bubble trail – just like the dorsal split-wave of a baitfish in panic and at speed at the surface. I've got a good stock of different colours of FisHair in my salt water fly tying kit box – and I raid it whenever I want to add a fizzing tail to the rear hook on a lure. I chose a blue and green mix for this example. Simply bind it to the shaft of the hook. I have an old habit of binding tails to rear hooks with red nylon wrapping thread, just to add a bit more colour to the game. I have friends who prefer white thread, or black thread. Our shared experience is that the thread colour makes absolutely no difference whatsoever to strike rates...it's just old habit. Seal the thread with gloss nail polish.

Connect the hook to the tail loop of the lure with a strong split ring. If you like to get a bit more freedom of movement, you can make a short chain of split rings, but take my advice – don't waste your money on cheap split rings; it's better to buy decent quality strong ones, if you like chaining them. To complete the lure, connect a decent swivel to the front with a careful spring twist wire tie, making at least six twists, and cut off any excess wire. Your Trolling Rattler lure is now ready to catch fish!

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