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Link et al.

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(54) **TOOL AND COLLAR DEVICE FOR USE WITH ATTACHING SKIRTS OF A FISHING LURE**

(75) Inventors: **Donald J. Link**, Shakopee, MN (US); **Timothy J. Link**, Shakopee, MN (US); **Eric W. Schwartz**, Bloomington, MN (US)

(73) Assignee: **Skirts Plus Corporation**, Shakopee, MN (US)

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(51) **Int. Cl.**
A01K 85/18 (2006.01)
A01K 85/00 (2006.01)

(52) **U.S. Cl.**
CPC ***A01K 85/18*** (2013.01); ***A01K 85/00*** (2013.01)

(58) **Field of Classification Search**
CPC A01K 85/00; A01K 91/00; A01K 85/18; A01K 85/02; A01K 85/16
USPC 43/42.28, 42.24, 42.11, 42.13, 42.39, 43/42.37, 42.36, 42.32, 44.2, 44.8; 16/2.1
See application file for complete search history.

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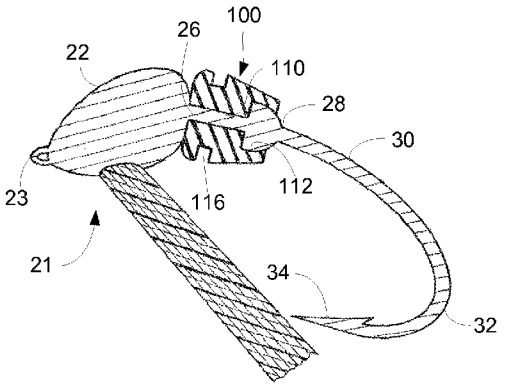
Primary Examiner — Darren W Ark
Assistant Examiner — Thien Thanh Pham
(74) *Attorney, Agent, or Firm* — Dustin R. DuFault; DuFault Law Firm, P.C.

(57) **ABSTRACT**

A tool and collar for affixing a multi-banded skirt to a fishing lure is disclosed. The collar includes a base member containing a central bore having a first portion with a first diameter and a second portion having a greater diameter. An outer annulus is contained on the collar for receiving a binder. The tool includes first and second mateable rods which receive the collar therebetween. Banded strands dispose on each rod in relation to the collar. The binder is positioned over each strand and disposed into the annulus to tie the strands to the collar. Opposing ends of each banded strand are cut to form the skirt. The collar and skirt are removed from the rods and positioned onto a lure with the first portion of the bore seating onto a retaining portion of the lure, and the second portion of the bore disposed about a flange thereof.

6 Claims, 8 Drawing Sheets



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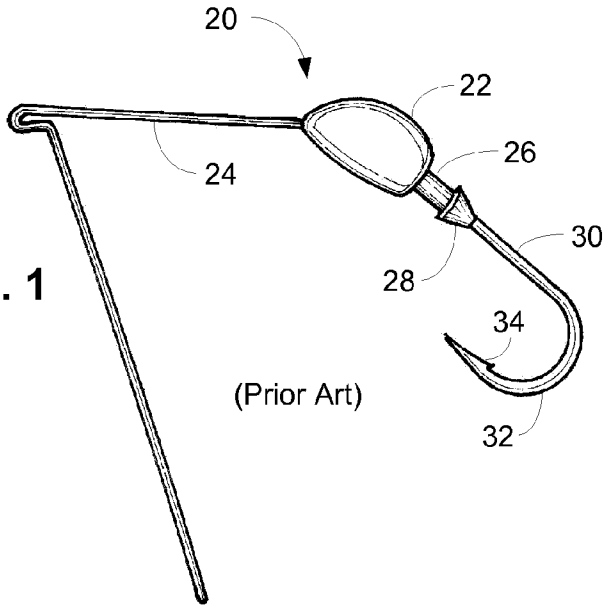


FIG. 1

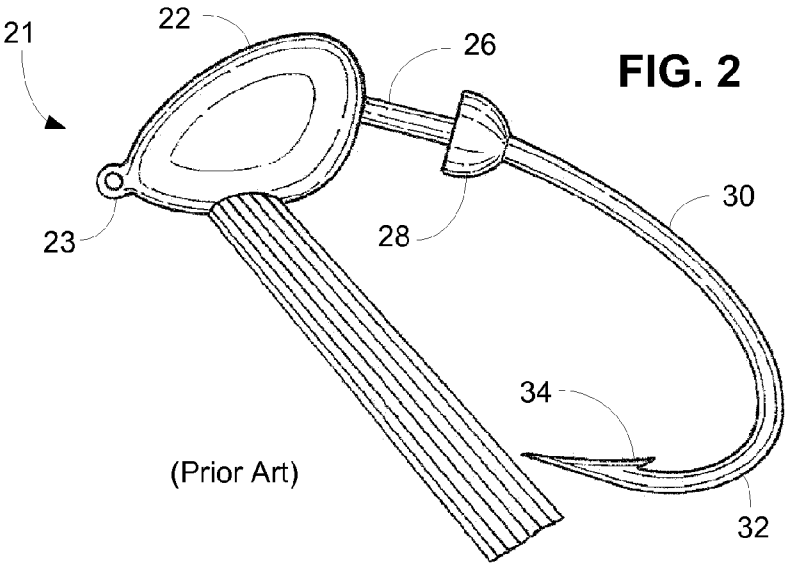


FIG. 2

FIG. 3

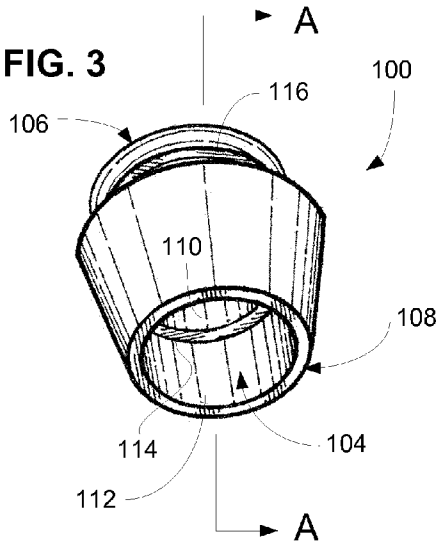
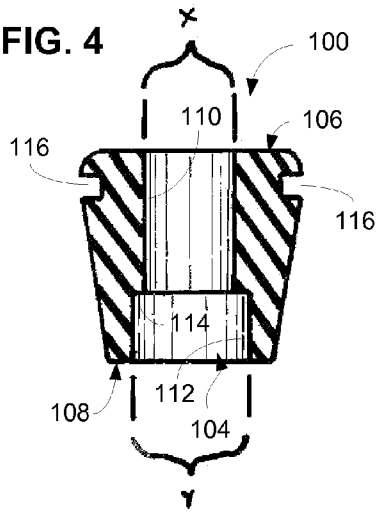


FIG. 4



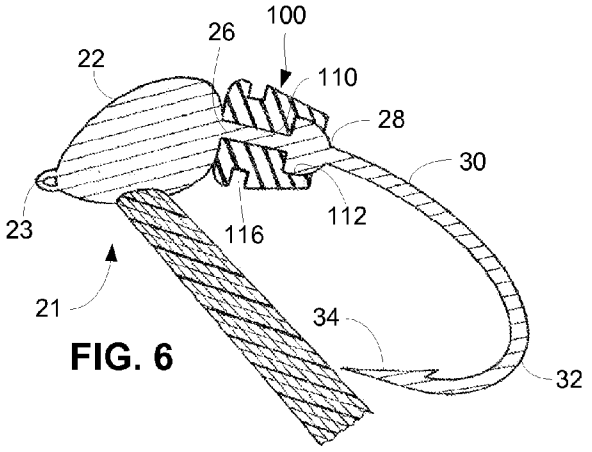


FIG. 6

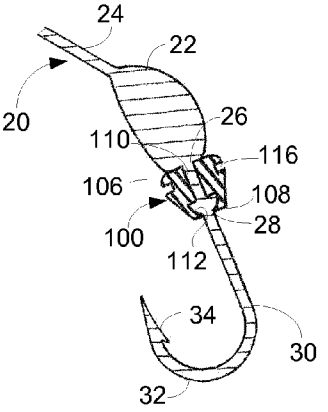


FIG. 5

FIG. 7

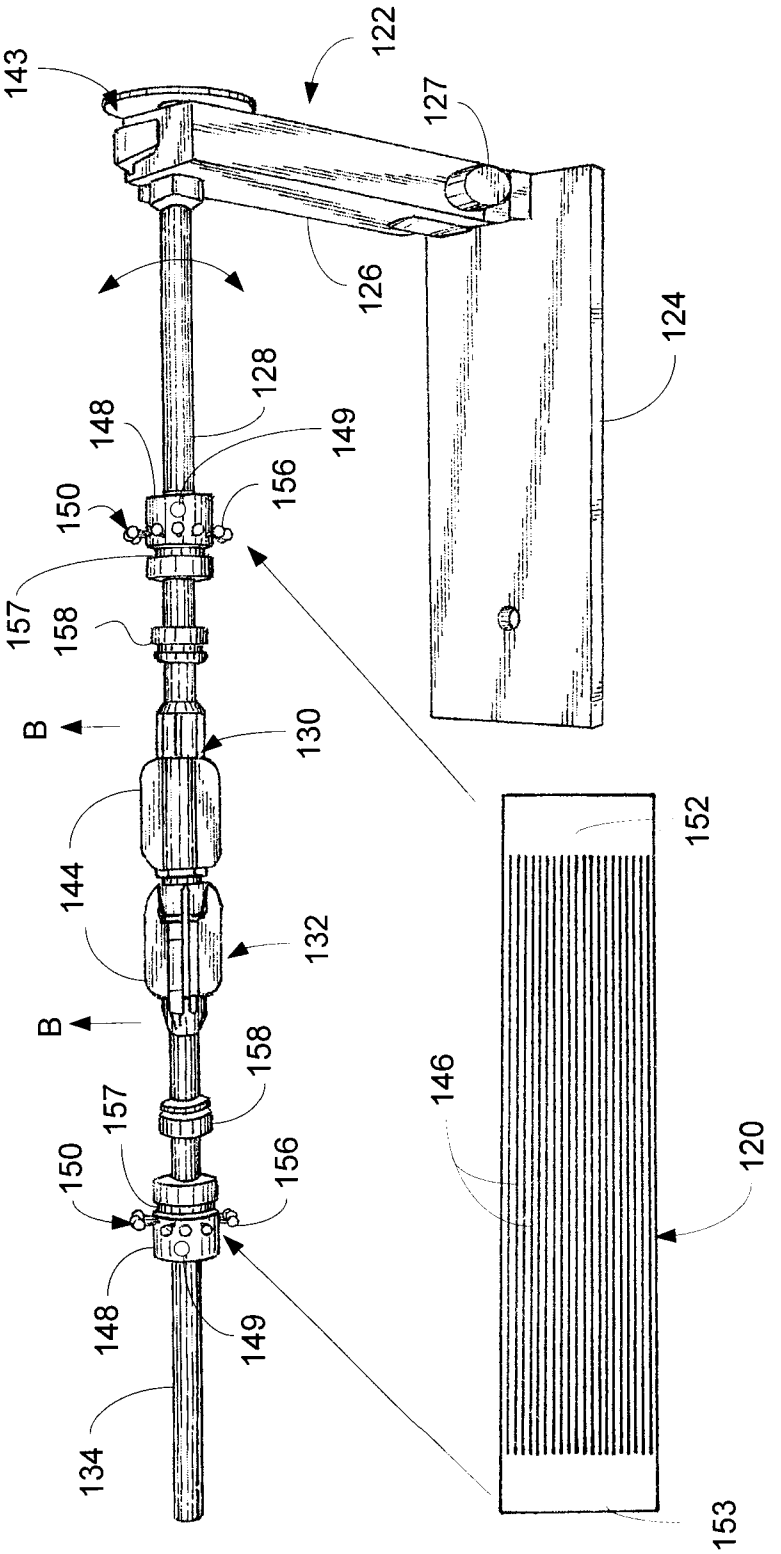

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FIG. 8

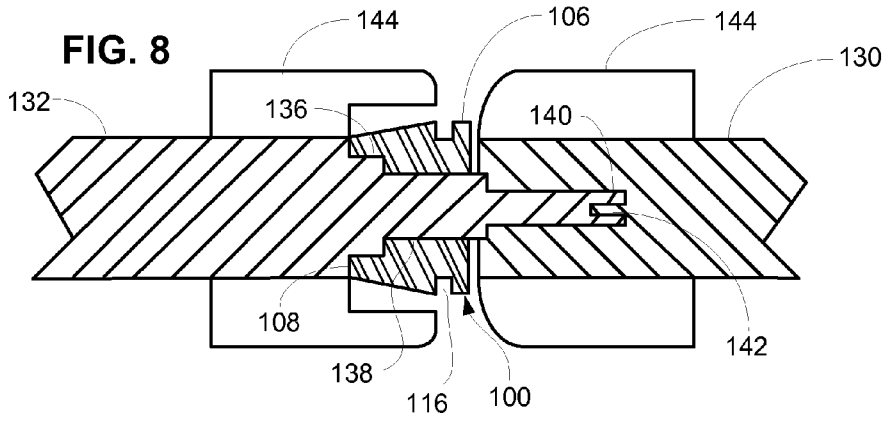


FIG. 9

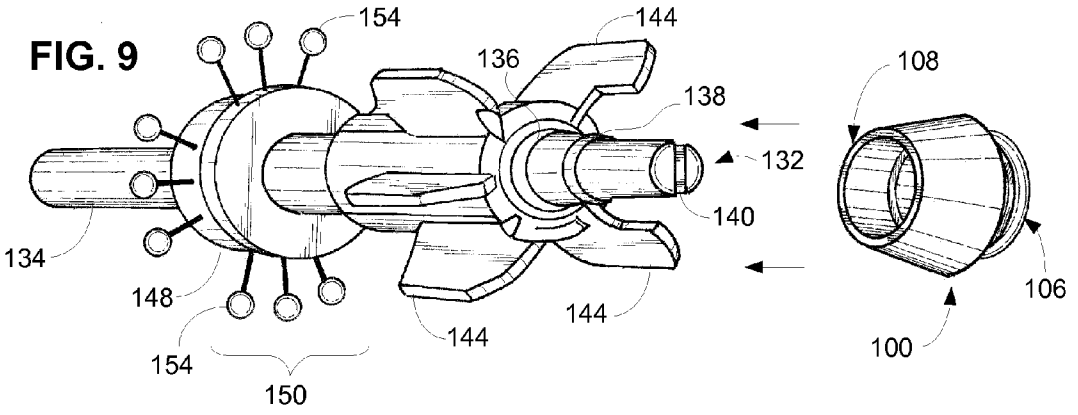
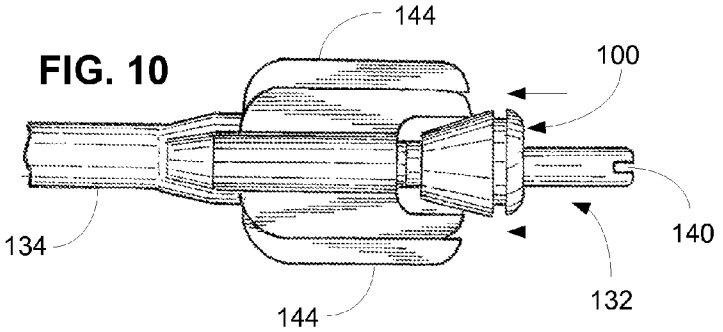


FIG. 10



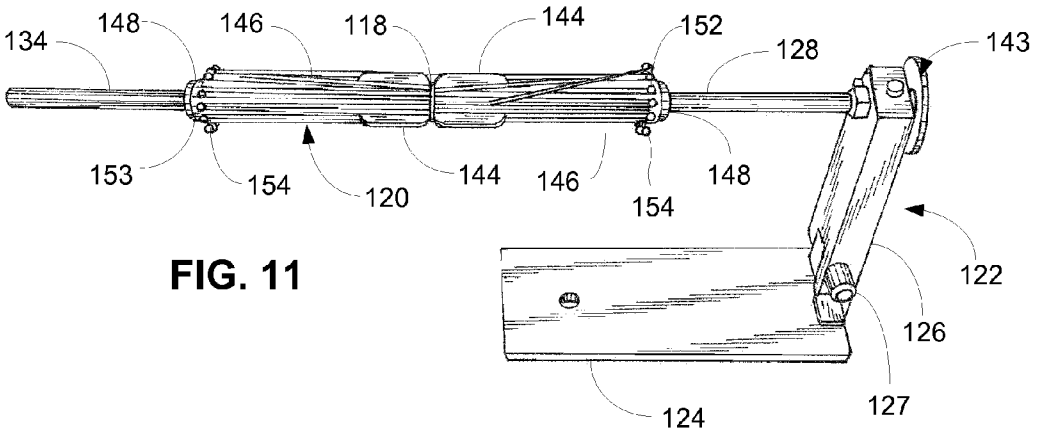


FIG. 11

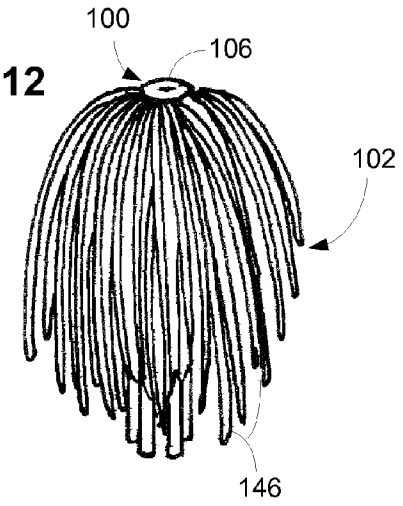


FIG. 12

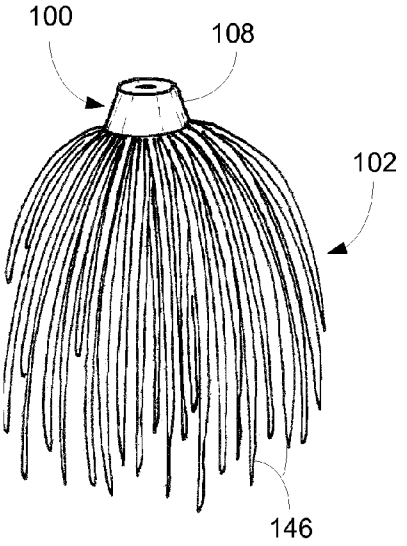


FIG. 13

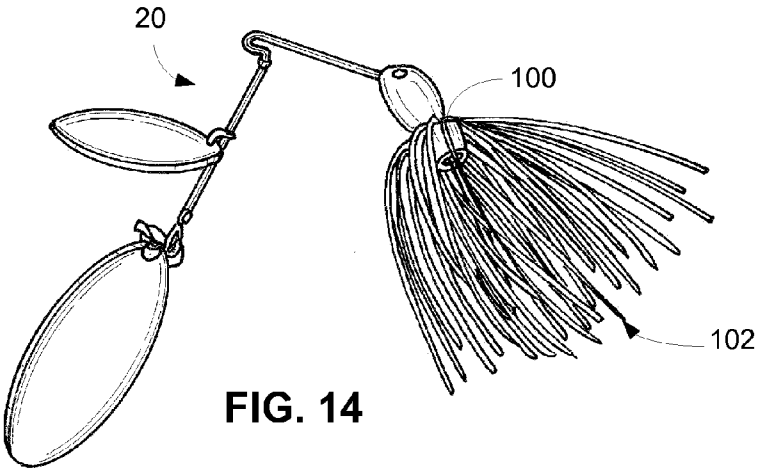


FIG. 14

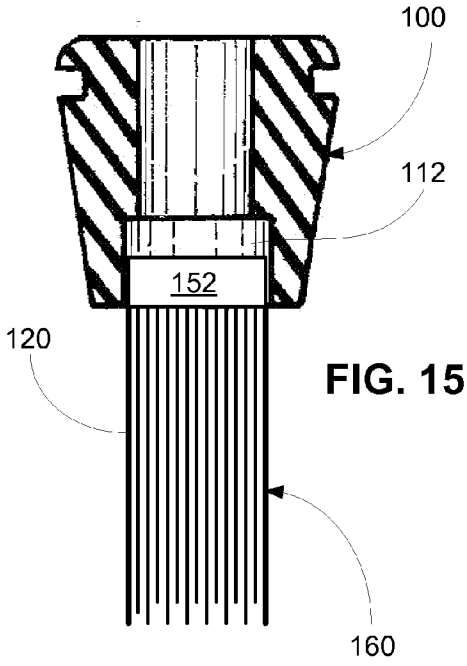


FIG. 15

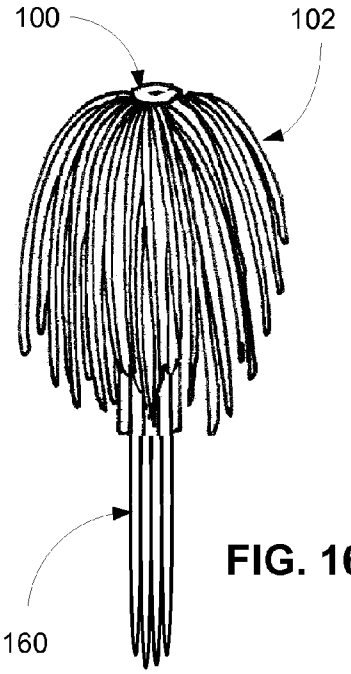


FIG. 16

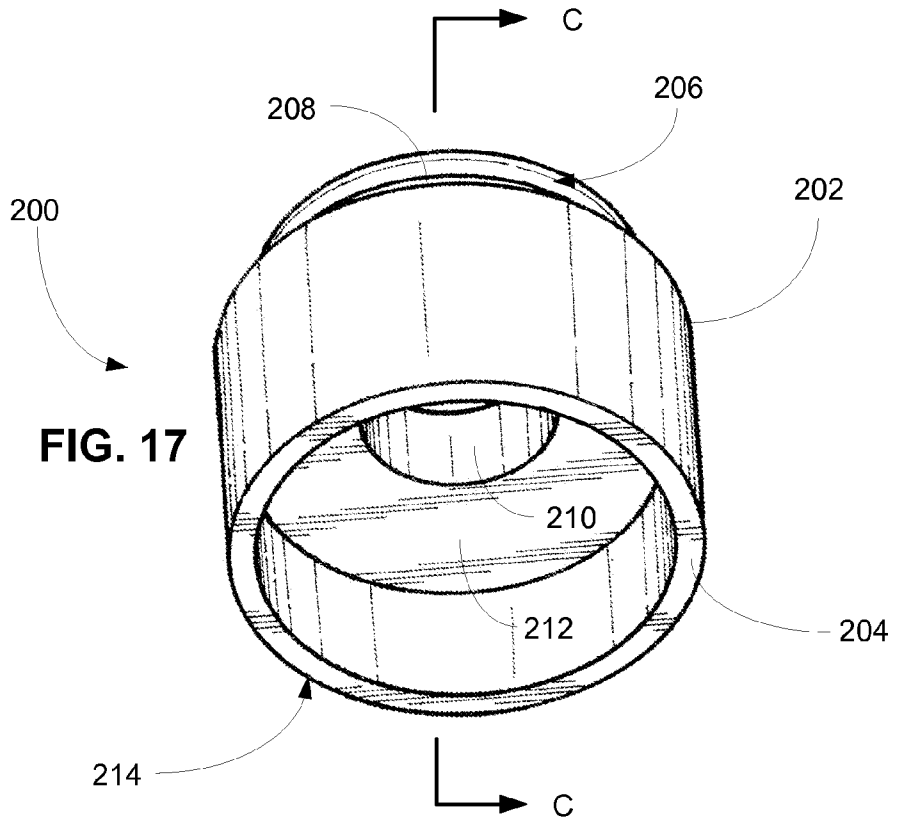

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FIG. 17

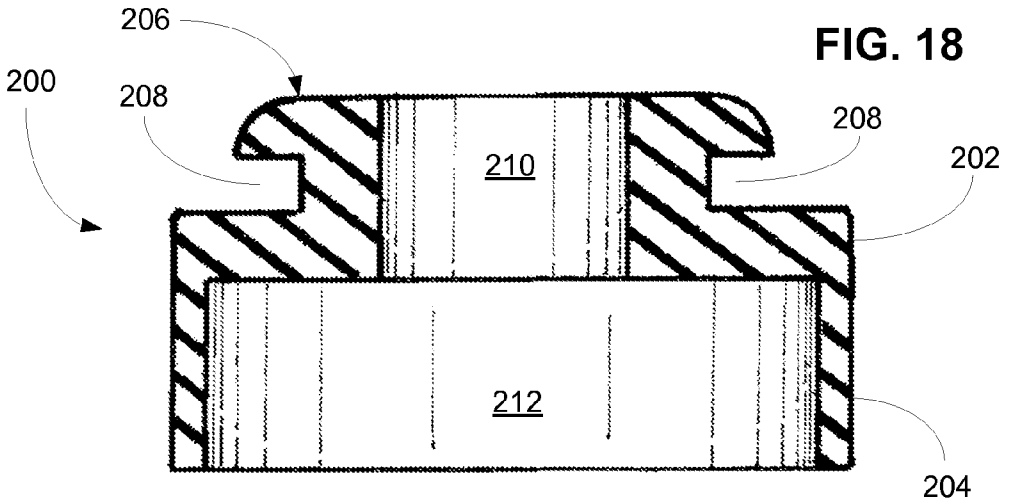
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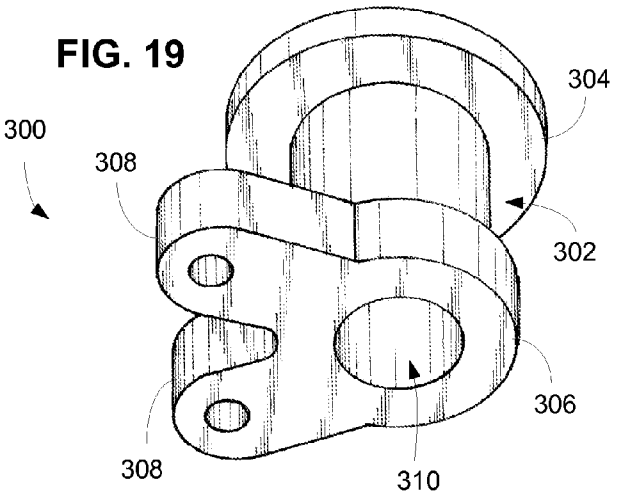
FIG. 18

FIG. 19



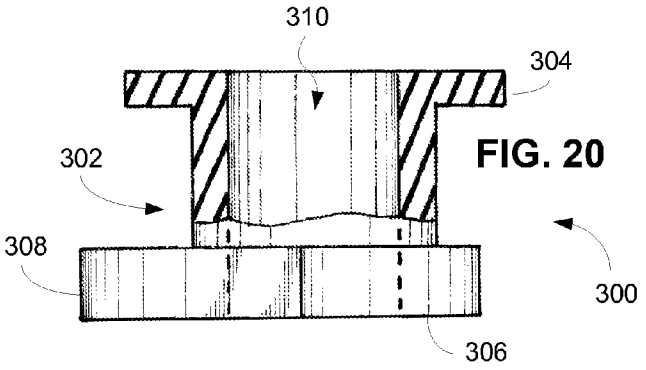
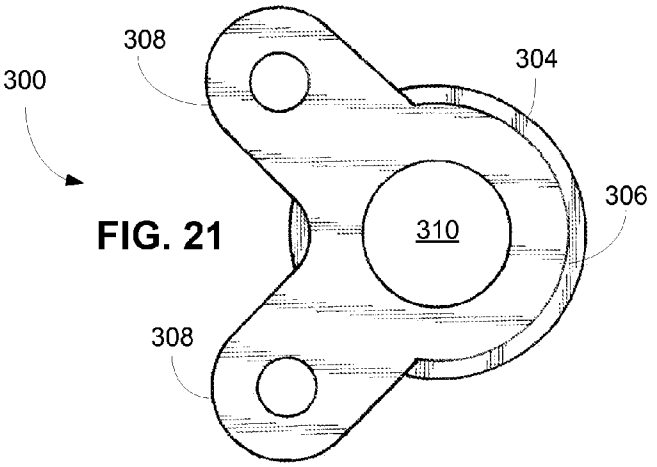


FIG. 20

FIG. 21



TOOL AND COLLAR DEVICE FOR USE WITH ATTACHING SKIRTS OF A FISHING LURE

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION(S)

This application claims the benefit of similarly titled U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 61/391,614 filed on 9 Oct. 2010, which is hereby incorporated herein by reference.

BACKGROUND OF INVENTION

The present invention is generally directed at skirted fishing lures. More particularly, the present invention is directed collars which are formed in various constructions to affix a multi-filament skirt to a lure, as well as a tool in which to affix the multi-filament skirt to said collar.

With the expanded popularity of sport fishing, and in particular bass and walleye fishing, a myriad of different lures have arrived on the market. Generally, these lures are designed from varieties of materials and in varying shapes and colors to enable fishermen to present a variety of basic offerings or presentations for top water, mid-water and bottom fishing. Each presentation is tailored to a particular application, for example, the structure being fished, zone of fish suspension, the mood of the fish, or the weather. Colors and attractors are attached to accentuate the offerings. The different lures enhance the fisherman's ability to match conditions and entice a strike.

Two common lures include spinner baits, as illustrated in FIG. **1**, and a jig head, as illustrated in FIG. **2**. Common characteristics shared by both lures include a ¼ to 1 ounce lead head which is molded to an appropriate up-turned eye hook or shaft for connection to a fishing line. Large numbers of such lures exist and which exhibit differing head designs, dressing attachment flanges and hook shapes, not to mention the attached dressings. The lures are formed to accept, or are fitted with, various dressings, for example, wire forms and spinner blades, plastisol bodies and multi-filament skirts, to enhance movement or attractant qualities.

Multi-filament skirts fitted to the lures are also normally fitted to flanges that project from the aft end of the head. Barbs or an annular ridge may be provided at the flange. The skirts typically are threaded over the flange and positioned in abutment to the head. The skirts typically include a collar from which a number of filaments trail. Examples of such skirts and lures are generally disclosed within the following commonly owned patents, each of which is incorporated herein by reference:

U.S. Pat. No. 5,709,047
U.S. Pat. No. 5,899,015
U.S. Pat. No. 6,199,312
U.S. Pat. No. 6,272,787
U.S. Pat. No. 6,544,372
U.S. Pat. No. 6,598,336

However, due to the varying manufacturers and the different sized overall heads on both spinner baits and jig heads, there is no universally accepted diameter size or length of the retainer or flange. As such, specific collars corresponding to the size of the respective flange must be produced in order to adequately attach a skirt to the lure. This requires a variety of different collars needing to be manufactured and distributed for each specific lure manufacturer, or to accommodate a specific sized retainer or flange. There therefore exists a need

in the art to provide a universal collar capable of affixing multi-banded skirts to a multitude of lure retainer and flange sizes.

Moreover, in configuring the collar of the present invention, prior-art tools which were used to form and attach the multi-banded skirts are no longer effective in performing the same function. Such an exemplary tool of the prior-art is fully disclosed in commonly owned U.S. Pat. No. 6,125,569, which is hereby fully incorporated herein by reference. There therefore exists a further need to provide a tool to effectively and efficiently attach the multi-banded skirt to the collar of the present invention.

BRIEF SUMMARY OF INVENTION

The present invention includes a flexible collar for affixing a multi-banded skirt to a lure. The collar contains a channel or bore therethrough having two portions of differing diameters. The first portion of the channel having the lesser diameter seats upon a retainer of the lure, while the second portion of the channel seats over a flange of the lure. Optionally, a decorative tail can be adhered to the second portion of the collar. The collar contains an outer annulus for receiving a binder to secure the multi-banded skirt to the collar.

The present invention further includes a tying tool for affixing the multi-banded skirt to the collar. The tying tool includes a base member for supporting a vertical post, which in turn supports a first rotatable rod. The first rod includes a female portion for receiving a male portion a second rod. The male portion of the second rod is configured to receive the collar. Upon fitting the collar onto the second rod, the male portion is inserted into the female portion to secure the second rod to the first rod. Upon affixing the second rod to the first rod, rotational or pivotal movement of the second rod relative to the first rod is not permitted. However, both the first rod and the second rod are rotatable as a unit relative to the post. The tool further includes a mechanism to rotate the position of the secured rods.

To form a new skirt, the following steps are followed. A new collar is positioned onto the male end of the tying tool which is locked in place. A selected amount of adhesive may be applied to the annulus to assist in securing the banded strands therein. The male end of the tying tool is inserted into the corresponding female end of the tying tool. In so doing, colored pins on opposing ends of each rod are aligned with one another. A banded strand is stretched and hooked over the corresponding colored coded pins. The fixture is unlocked to enable the rods to be rotated, preferably 90 degrees, wherein the tool is again locked into place. Additional banded strands are added to the tool. Once all the banded strands are in place, a length of rubber thread is disposed between the fins and into the annulus. The thread is wound around the annulus such that the strands fan out and are evenly distributed about the fixture. Three knots are then tied with the thread. Excess thread is then snipped away. The strands are then cut at each end to form the skirt. The male rod is removed from the female rod, and the collar is removed from the male rod. The skirt is then ready to be applied to a fishing lure.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. **1** is a perspective view of a prior-art spinner bait.

FIG. **2** is a perspective view of a prior-art jig head.

FIG. **3** is a perspective view of a collar in accordance with a first embodiment of the present invention.

FIG. **4** is a cross-section view of the collar in accordance with the first embodiment of the present invention taken along lines A-A in FIG. **3**.

FIG. **5** is a cross-sectional view of a collar in accordance with the first embodiment of the present invention positioned on the jig head of the prior art.

FIG. **6** is a cross-sectional view of a collar in accordance with the first embodiment of the present invention positioned on the spinner bait of the prior art.

FIG. **7** is a perspective view of a fixture tool in accordance with the present invention.

FIG. **8** is a cross-sectional view of the fixture tool taken along lines B-B in FIG. **7**.

FIG. **9** is a perspective view of a male portion of a second rod of the fixture tool before the collar of the first embodiment of the present invention is positioned thereon.

FIG. **10** is a side view of the male portion of the second rod with the collar of the first embodiment of the present invention positioned thereon.

FIG. **11** is a perspective view of the fixture tool of the present invention with a plurality of banded strands positioned thereon.

FIG. **12** is an upright perspective view of the first embodiment collar of the present invention containing a skirt.

FIG. **13** is an upside down perspective view of the first embodiment collar of the present invention containing a skirt.

FIG. **14** is a perspective view of the skirt and first embodiment collar affixed to the head of the spinner bait of the prior art.

FIG. **15** is a cross sectional view of the first embodiment collar having a decorative tail adhered to a lower portion thereof.

FIG. **16** is a perspective view of a skirt in accordance with the present invention having an optional decorative tail.

FIG. **17** is a perspective view of a collar in accordance with a second embodiment of the present invention.

FIG. **18** is a cross-sectional view of the collar in accordance with the second embodiment of the present invention taken along lines C-C in FIG. **17**.

FIG. **19** is a perspective view of a collar in accordance with a third embodiment of the present invention.

FIG. **20** is a partial cross-sectional side view of the collar in accordance with the third embodiment of the present invention.

FIG. **21** is bottom view of the collar in accordance with the third embodiment of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

A spinner bait of the prior art is indicated at **20** in FIG. **1**, while a jig head is indicated at **21** in FIG. **2**. Both the spinner bait **20** and the jig head **21** generally include a ¼ to 1 ounce lead head **22** which is molded to an appropriate up-turned eye hook **23** or shaft **24** for connection to a fishing line (not shown). The head **22** exhibits an ellipsoid shape and is typically molded from lead, but can be molded from any of a variety of other materials which provide suitable weight and durability. An appendage or dressing retainer **26** extends aft of the head **22** and supports a flange **28**. The appendage **26** projects along a shank **30** of the hook **32**, forward of the barb **34**.

A first embodiment collar of the present invention for affixing a multi-banded skirt to a spinner bait **20** or jig head **21** is generally indicated at **100** in FIGS. **3** and **4**. The design of the collar **100** not only assists in forming the shape of the multi-banded skirt **102** (hereinafter generally referred to as a "skirt"), but to affix the skirt **102** to a variety of different sized spinner baits **20** or jigs **21**, as illustrated in FIGS. **1** and **2**, as distributed by various manufacturers. For purposes of this description, spinner baits **20** and jig heads **21** of the prior art will be used interchangeably. As best illustrated in FIG. **3**, the collar **100** includes a channel or **104** beginning at a top end **106** and extending through to a bottom end **108**. It should be noted that for purposes of this description, relative terms such as "top" and "bottom" are used in the context of the figures, and are by no means meant to be limiting. The channel **104** includes a first portion or bore **110** with a first diameter x and a second portion or bore **112** with a second diameter y. Diameter y is slightly larger than diameter x, thus forming a ledge **114** where the first bore **110** and the second bore **112** of the channel **104** meet. With the collar **100** being manufactured from an elastic and pliant material, for example rubber or silicone, when positioning the collar **100** onto the lure the first portion **110** can be positioned over the flange **28**, being slightly stretched in the process, and retract back onto the retainer **26** of the lure **20** or **21**, resulting in a snug fit as the wall of the first bore **110** of the channel **104** engages with the retainer **26** and the collar **100** is set in place. As is illustrated in FIGS. **5** and **6**, upon positioning the collar **100** onto the spinner bait **20** (FIG. **5**) or the jig head **21** (FIG. **6**), the second bore **112** of the channel **104** having diameter y is positioned to fit over or about the flange **28**. In so doing, and with the first portion **110** snugly fit against the retainer **26**, the ledge **114** abuts against and engages the flange **28**, preventing the collar **100** from unexpectedly sliding off during use.

Referring back to FIG. **4**, the collar **100** further includes an outer annulus **116** positioned towards the top end **106** for receiving a string **118**, or other suitable binder such as for example, a wire, for tying a plurality sets of banded strands **120** which eventually form the skirt **102**. Immediately below the annulus **116**, the lower portion **18** is downward tapered or frusto-conically formed to assist in directing individual strands to drape over the collar **100** to provide an overall natural and aesthetically pleasing look to the skirt **102**.

To attach the plurality of banded strands **120** to the collar **100** to form the skirt **102**, a fixture device or tool **122** is used. As illustrated in FIG. **7**, the fixture device **122** includes a base member **124** attachable to a work bench or table (not shown) for supporting a stanchion or vertical post **126**. The stanchion **126** may be pivotally attached to the base **124** by bolt **127**. The stanchion **126** in turn supports a first rotatable rod **128** extending from a distal portion thereof. As illustrated in FIG. **8**, an opposing end of the first rod **128** includes a female portion **130** for receiving a male portion **132** of a corresponding second rod **134**. As illustrated in FIGS. **9** and **10**, the male portion **132** is also configured to receive the collar **100**, bottom end **108** first, including a portion **136** having an approximate diameter of y for receiving the second end **108** of the collar **100**, and another portion **138** having an approximate diameter of x for receiving the first portion **106** of the collar **100**. Upon fitting the collar **100** over the male portion **132** of the second rod **134**, a selected amount of adhesive may be applied to the annulus **116** to assist in securing the banded strands **120** therein. The male portion **132** is then inserted into the female portion **130** to secure the second rod **134** to the first rod **128**. Preferably, such securement prevents rotation or pivotal movement of the second rod **134** relative to the first rod **128**. This is accomplished by providing the male portion **132** with a slot **140** and the female portion **130** with a corresponding tab **142** disposable within the slot **140**, as is illustrated in FIG. **8**. Upon positioning the tab **142** within the slot **140**, rotational or pivotal movement of the second rod **134** relative to the first rod **128** is not permitted. However, as the first rod **128** rotationally attaches to the stanchion **126**, both

the first rod **128** and the second rod **134** are rotatable together relative to the stanchion **126**. Further, it is well within the scope of the present invention to modify the configuration of the first and second rods such that the male end includes the tab and the female end includes a slot to receive the tab. The tool **122** further includes a mechanism **143** to rotate the position of the secured rods **128**, **134**, and lock the rods in a selected orientation which is helpful when hooking the banded strands to each rod.

The male portion **132** and the female portion **130** of the respective rods further include a plurality of fins **144** extending outward therefrom. The fins **144** assist in aligning individual filaments **146** of each banded strands **120** which form the skirt **102**. Further, the fins **144** of the male portion **132** extend forward of the male portion and are designed to receive the lower half **108** of the collar **100** unhindered with the fins **144** terminating proximate to the annulus **116** when the collar **100** is fully positioned on the second rod **134**. The first and second rods, **128** and **134** respectively, also include respective carriages **148** which contain a plurality of prong sets **150** for securing the banded strands **120** to the tool **122** when developing the skirt **102**. Each carriage **148** is selectively positionable along its respective rod, **128** or **134**, to accommodate banded strands **120** of differing sizes which may be used on a wide variety of lures, including jig heads or spinner baits. Upon positing each carriage **148** to its desired position along its respective rod **128** or **134**, set screws **149** contained with each carriage **148** are set to lock the carriage in place. The banded strands **120** are preferably manufactured from an elastic material, for example silicone or rubber. As illustrated in FIG. **7**, individual filaments **146** of each banded strand **120** are held together at opposing terminal ends by solid portions **152**, **153** of the elastic material. To place each banded strand **120** onto the tool **122**, the opposing terminal ends **152** and **153** are pulled apart and positioned about a corresponding prong set **150** positioned on the first rod **128** and the second rod **134**. Each set of prongs **150**, preferably containing three prongs **154** per set, may include a colored bulb **156** positioned on a terminal end thereof for aligning the male end **132** and female end **130** of the respective rods. As mentioned, corresponding fins **144** of both the first rod **128** and the second rod **134** assist in aligning individual strands **146**. Prior to positioning the banded strands **120** onto each set of prongs **150**, an adhesive (not shown) may be applied to the annulus **116** to further secure the strands **146** thereto.

Upon affixing a banded strand **120** to a set of corresponding prongs **150**, the rods **128**, **134** are pivoted between approximately a third to a quarter turn so that another banded strand **120** can be positioned onto the tool **122** in the same manner. This process is repeated until an adequate number of banded strands **120**, preferably enough banded strands to cover the perimeter of the collar **100**, are applied to the tool **122** to form the skirt **102**. Typically between three and four banded strands **120** are used, but this number of banded strands **120** can be increased or decreased, depending on the size and type of skirt **102** desired.

Upon applying the banded strands **120** to the tool **122**, the string **118** is used to tie the bands **120** to the collar **100**, as illustrated in FIG. **11**. As the fins **144** of the second rod **134** terminate proximate to the annulus **116** of the collar **100**, these fins can be used as guides for positioning the string **118** to dispose within the annulus **116**. Preferably, the string **118** is manufactured from an elastic material, which permits the collar **100** to expand when being positioned over the flange **28** of the jig **20** and retract back onto the retainer **26**. Optionally, adhesive may be applied to the annulus **116** and the string **118** after the string **118** has bound the bands **120** to provide greater durability. It should be noted, though, that use of only an adhesive, without the string **118**, to adhere to the strands **120** to the collar **100** is well within the scope of the present invention.

Upon securing the banded strands **120** to the collar **100**, the opposing terminal ends **152** and **153** are cut with a scissors at a desired length. To ensure uniformity in length from one skirt to another, carriages **148** include a groove **157** for use as a cutting guide. Alternatively, if shorter skirts are desired, plastic or rubber grommet guides **158** slidably dispose on both the first rod **128** and the second rod **134** to assist the user in cutting the strands. The grommets **158** maintain a frictional engagement with each rod, and can be moved by the user to any desired position. Upon cutting each banded strand **120** on both ends **152** and **153**, the second rod **134** is removed from the first rod **128**, and the collar **100** removed from the second rod **134**. The skirt **102** is thereby formed, as is illustrated in FIGS. **12** and **13**. The skirt **102** is then positionable onto the jig head **20** to form the lure. To do so, the top portion **106** of the collar **100** is positioned first onto and past the barb **34**, past the flange **28** and onto the retainer **26**, for example, as is illustrated in FIG. **14**. Due to the plasticity and elasticity of the collar **100**, the skirt **102** can be mounted to a variety of different sized lures.

Optionally, a decorative tail **160** can be added to collar **100**, as is illustrated in FIGS. **15** and **16**. The tail **160** is formed by applying with adhesive portion **152** of banded strand **120** to an inner surface of the second lower portion **112** of the collar **100**. Lower portion **153** of the banded strand **120** is then cut away, thus forming the decorative tail **160** which can extend past the skirt **102**.

Referring now to FIGS. **17** and **18**, a second embodiment of the collar is illustrated at **200**. The collar of the second embodiment is designed to be used with relatively larger spinner baits **20** and jig heads **21**. The second embodiment collar **200** includes a base portion **202** having a circumferential wall **204** extending downward therefrom. Extending upward from an opposing side is a collared portion **206** having an outer annulus **208** for receiving a string, or other suitable binder, for tying banded strands **120** to the collar **200** which form the skirt **102**, as similarly described with respect to collar **100** using tool **122**. A channel **210** extends through the base portion **202** to a bottom end **214**. Similar to the first embodiment **100**, the collar **200** of the second embodiment is manufactured from an elastic or pliant material. The top portion **206** can therefore be positioned over the retainer **26** of the spinner bait **20** or jig **21**, being slightly stretched in the process, resulting in a snug fit as the wall of the channel **210** engages with the retainer **26** and the collar **200** is set in place. An interior wall **212** of base **202** is abutable with the flange **28** of the spinner bait **20** or jig **21**, preventing the collar **200** from unexpectedly sliding off during use of the lure.

Referring now to FIGS. **19**, **20** and **21**, a collar in accordance with a third embodiment of the present invention is shown at **300**. The collar **300** contains an elongated annulus **302** having opposing top flange **304** and bottom flange **306** positioned at terminal ends thereof. Flange **306** contains ears **308** with apertures for holding other forms of bait. A central channel is **310** is positionable to receive the retainer **26** of either the spinner bait **20** or jig **21** in the same fashion as previously described with regard to collar **100** or collar **200**. A skirt can be affixed to the annulus **302** with the fixture device **122** as previously described herein. By employing an elongated annulus **302**, the individual bands of the skirt are allowed to collapse more freely, resulting in less of a "hoop" look for the final skirt. In affixing the collar **300** to either the spinner bait **20** or jig **21**, the collar **300** is positioned past the

barb **34**, hook **32** and flange **28** such that the top flange **304** seat next to the head **22**, and bottom flange **306** abuts against flange **28**.

Those skilled in the art should understand how to make and use the present invention based upon the description and attached drawings. Although the present invention has been described with reference to preferred embodiments, workers skilled in the art will recognize that changes may be made in form and detail without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention.

The invention claimed is:

1. In combination with a fishing lure, A collar for affixing a multi-banded skirt to the fishing lure comprising:

the fishing lure having a retaining portion and a flange positioned between a head and a hook thereof;

a frusto-conical unitary base member having a first end and an opposing second end, a diameter of the first end being greater than a diameter of the second end;

a first cylindrical bore extending into the base member from the first end, the first cylindrical bore disposed onto the retaining portion of the lure;

a second cylindrical bore extending into the base member from the opposing second end, the first bore and the second bore in communication with one another, the second bore having a greater diameter than the first bore, the second bore disposed onto the flange of the lure; and

an annulus integrally disposed on an outer wall of the base member circumferentially around the first cylindrical bore, the annulus for retaining the multi-banded skirt.

2. The device of claim **1** and further comprising a ledge extending between the first bore and the second bore, the ledge abuttable against the flange of the lure to prevent removal of the collar from the lure.

3. The device of claim **1** wherein the base is constructed of an elastomeric material, wherein positioning the collar onto the fishing lure, the first bore is permitted to stretch to accommodate being positioned past and over the flange.

4. The collar of claim **1** wherein the multi-banded skirt disposes within the annulus, the multi-banded skirt being retained therein by use of a binder.

5. The collar of claim **1** wherein the annulus disposes on the outer surface of the base member about the first cylindrical bore.

6. In combination with a fishing lure, A collar for affixing a multi-banded skirt to the fishing lure comprising:

the fishing lure including a retaining portion and a flange positioned between a head and a hook thereof;

a frusto-conical unitary base member having a first end and an opposing second end, a diameter of the first end being greater than a diameter of the second end;

a first cylindrical bore centrally extending into the base member from the first end, the first cylindrical bore disposed onto the retaining portion of the lure;

a second cylindrical bore centrally extending into the base member from the opposing second end, the first bore and the second bore in communication with one another, the second bore having a greater diameter than the first bore, the second bore disposed onto the flange of the lure;

an annulus contained on an outer surface of the base member proximate the first end thereof, the annulus positioned around the first cylindrical bore, the annulus for receiving a portion of the multi-banded skirt; and

a binder disposable about the annulus to retain the multi-banded skirt.

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