

# On The Fly

September 2004

"Fly tying is a school from which we never graduate"

## PATTERN OF THE MONTH – Bead Head Big Bird

Hook: Daichi 1560 or equivalent. Size 8 - 12.  
Bead: 3/16" Copper.  
Thread: Brown 6/0.  
Weight: .020" Large lead wire.  
Tail: Natural brown partridge.  
Body: Light brown synthetic dubbing  
Rib: Fine gold wire or oval tinsel.  
Body Hackle: Natural brown partridge.  
Thorax One or two turns of body dubbing.



### Tying Instructions:

- 1) Insert the brass bead onto the hook and push it up against the eye. Tie on the thread behind the lead and secure the lead with thread wraps forward and back. Apply head cement or super glue to anchor the bead and the lead.
- 2) Lay down a good thread base back to just above the barb and tie in a clump of partridge, 1/2 shank long, for the tail.
- 3) Tie on the ribbing material and pull it back out of the way. Form a dubbing loop at this point, insert dubbing material, twist the loop and wrap a nicely tapered body up to the head. Now wind four turns of ribbing over the body.
- 4) Select a partridge plume just long enough to reach the length of the hook (see fly illustration). Tie it in by the tip then fold and stroke the barbs to the rear as you wind 2 -3 turns. Tie back on the hackle until the proper angle is achieved.
- 5) Dub a little more body material directly onto the thread and make two turns to form a thorax right behind the bead and in front of the hackle. This will cover the thread wraps and give the fly a buggier look. Form a whip finish and apply cement.

My first exposure to the Bead Head Big Bird was on a pontoon float trip down the Rogue River with Ron Metzger. As we progressed down the river on a beautiful fishing day we were looking forward to one particular favorite slot. As luck would have it "our" slot was occupied so we fished the area above hoping the angler would move on before disturbing the big fish we just knew were there. This angler knew it too and proceeded to catch five nice steelhead 24 inches or better within 30 minutes. When he finished and was about to leave, he waved us over and showed us the successful pattern: a Bead Head Big Bird. He even gave each of us a copy to try and explained how to fish it. I tied up several in different shades of brown and caught my first good-sized steelhead a few weeks later. There are good reasons why this pattern works consistently well under summer and fall conditions: the weight gets the fly down to the fish's holding zone; it's a great natural looking emerging caddis imitation; and it has that classic profile and partridge movement that triggers the strike. Give it a try and let me know how it works for you.

### TYING TIPS - Thread Heads Again

Though simple in construction and function, thread heads are, to many tiers, a plague. About thread heads much has been written, and size and shape are always debated. I believe these issues are a matter of style, but their function is a matter of necessity. A bit of understanding and planning can make thread heads manageable, even make them pleasant to tie. And the result is a head that is neat and sound. Here are a few suggestions that should help. **1)** Plan ahead by always leaving space for the head on the hook's shank. I leave a bare spot between the eye and the point at which I start my thread. No materials get tied on in that bare spot, leaving room for the thread head. **2)** Spend the extra time to closely trim the last materials, the ones near the hook's eye. Forming a thread head over a bulky mess takes too much thread and too much time. **3)** Draw everything back from the eye to allow access for creating a head. **4)** Add just enough head cement to saturate the threads and no more, otherwise the excess cement flows back into the materials, darkening and freezing their movement.