

On The Fly

September 2006

“Fly tying is a school from which we never graduate”

PATTERN OF THE MONTH-Silver Comet

Hook: Standard salmon/steelhead size 2-6
Thread: Orange 6-0.
Tail: Orange calf tail.
Body: Silver diamond braid.
Hackle: Orange and yellow, one of each.
Eyes: Silver bead chain.



Tying Instructions:

- Step 1:** Start the thread 2 eye lengths behind the eye. This is your thread base for the eyes and marker for the collar tie-in point. Wind a tread base back to just above the barb of the hook.
- Step 2:** Select a bunch of calf tail about one shank-length long and tie it in on top of the hook so the butts cove the full length of the body.
- Step 3:** Tie in the diamond braid at the front of the body and bind it down the full length of the body to the base of the tail.
- Step 4:** Wrap the braid once under the tail to cock it up slightly, then forward in tight, close turns to cover the body, then bind off and trim.
- Step 5:** Select a orange and yellow soft hackle feather with barbs long enough to reach the point of the hook. Wind the outside hackle 3-4 turns forward and tie off. Wind the second hackle through the first to mix the colors. Tie off and trim.
- Step 6:** Fasten the bead chain eyes to the hook just in front of the hackle with figure eight turns of thread. Form a neat head and whip finish.

The Silver Comet is part of the successful series of bright flies used in winter for Salmon and Steelhead. Tied originally in Northern California by Lloyd Silvis, this pattern evolved in the early 1940's and gained popularity by the mid 50's. The Comet series, characterized by its long tail and bead chain eyes, is a dredging fly for cool deep flows. The placement of eyes on top of the shank will flip the fly over so the hook rides up-side-down. This feature makes it a favorite for fishing close to the bottom without snagging. Silver and gold colors seem to be most common.

The popular Boss series was adapted from the Comet by Grant King and Virgil Sullivan from Guerneville, CA. They changed the tail to black and the body material to chenille. Both patterns work well near the bottom and are generally fished wet fly swing or dead drift with an indicator. It's never too early to stock up the fly boxes for winter fishing. The Comet is an easy and inexpensive pattern. Tie some up, give them a test flight and let me know how you do.

TYING TIPS

The bead chain eyes can be tied on first instead of last. Neither method is more or less correct. I find that the location is more consistent without crowding the head area, the hackle blends better into the eyes, and the eyes are more secure and durable.

Body, tail, and hackle colors can be endlessly changed to meet changing conditions and location. Tie on a black tail, black chenille body, and a silver rib and your fly becomes the Black Boss. Add life to the fly by using soft hackle for the collar and tail. Try some crystal flash as a wing case with a few strands extending into the tail. Kid goat work great for tails. Oval tinsel can be used for the body. Paint the eyes any color you like. Be creative and bold, you may come up with the next “killer” fly.

I would encourage all tiers to donate a sample of your skill to the Steelhead Fundraiser. It's a great cause, worth the effort.