

On The Fly

April 2008

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

PATTERN OF THE MONTH-Z-Wing Caddis

Hook: Daiichi 1120 or equivalent, curved, heavy wire scud hook, size 14-20.
Bead: Optional, small copper.
Thread: Olive 8/0.
Rib: Chartreuse monocord or equivalent 3/0 thread.
Wingcase: Golden brown turkey tail feather slip.
Body: Buggy nymph dubbing, olive/dun blend.
Wing Pads: Light dun to dark dun Z-Lon or poly yarn.
Collar: Buggy nymph dubbing, caddis green.
Head: Peacock herl.



Tying Instructions:

- 1) (If your fly is to have a bead head, slip the bead onto the hook and slide it forward until it is against the eye.) Start the thread two eye-widths behind the eye (or bead) and wind the thread rearward laying down a thread base to a point half way down the bend.
- 2) Tie in the thread for the rib and let it hang to the back.
- 3) Tie in a slip of turkey tail for the wingcase and let it hang to the back.
- 4) Dub the thread and wrap it forward to the thread tie-in point and tie off.
- 5) Pull the wingcase over the dubbed body and tie-off.
- 6) Wind the rib material forward in five even turns, then tie-off and trim both the rib and turkey slip.
- 7) Tie in a one-inch piece of Z-Lon or poly yarn on top of the hook and tie down the material so each end of the yarn sticks out on opposite sides of the fly. Trim the yarn wing pads to about $\frac{3}{4}$ the length of the body.
- 8) Dub the thread for the collar and wind it forward halfway to the eye (or bead).
- 9) Tie in a couple peacock herls, twist them around the thread, then wind forward to form a head. Whip-finish and apply cement.

The Z-wing caddis was developed by Mike Mercer of Redding, California, as his improvement to the famous Deep Sparkle Pupa of Gary LaFontaine, not that it needed improvement. The curved hook gives a natural, hunched profile. The wingcase of turkey tail with its mottling and hairy appearance gives realism not found in synthetics. The mixtures of colors in the dubbing and the contrast of colors at the collar gives a natural insect look. The Z-Lon or poly yarn used as wing pads to imitate the semi-formed wings, creates the transparency and shape. And of course, peacock herl for the front collar glitters with an attracting iridescence unequalled by any other material. Together these components make up one of the most effective caddis pupa imitations available today.

For the fly fisher, day in and day out, throughout the season, it is the pupa – that transitional form of the caddis between larva and adult – that gets the job done. This is the stage where the larva begins to take on aspects of the adult, releasing from the rocks and rising towards the surface. As such it is fished from bottom to top in the water column. Designed primarily for moving water, the pattern can be tied in a variety of sizes, with or without a bead. Three colors can cover hatches throughout the season: lime green in the spring (Mothers Day), olive on cloudy days or in the fall, and amber all year. The Z-Wing Caddis is a design that is relatively simple and fairly straightforward. Most important it looks like what it is supposed to be imitating and works.

TYING TIPS

The body should be dubbed heavy with a slight taper. When you pull the wingcase over the body, be careful to not pull too tight because this causes the turkey tail material to split and thus expose the body material on top. When you tie the Z-Lon up against the body dubbing this will naturally splay the fibers at a 45-degree angle to the hook shank.

This is a moderately easy pattern using common materials. So tie some up and give them a test flight. Let me know how they work.