

# On The Fly

August 2006

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

## PATTERN OF THE MONTH: Burlap

Hook: Standard salmon/steelhead size 4-10.  
Thread: Gray or dark gray size 6/0.  
Tail: Mottled deer hair.  
Body: Strands of burlap, picked out.  
Collar: Soft, long grizzly feather tied back slightly.  
Head: Thread



## Tying Instructions:

- 1) Start the thread two eye-lengths behind the eye. This is your marker for the collar tie-in point. Wind a thread base back to just above the barb of the hook.
- 2) If this is a weighted fly, wind the lead wire on the hook shank and bind down the wire.
- 3) Select a bunch of deer hair about 2/3 shank-length long and tie it in on top of the hook. Do not wrap the hair so tight that it flairs.
- 4) Wrap the thread forward to the end of the eye loop. Tie in the burlap on the side of the hook facing you to fill the gap created by the return. Tie down the burlap the length of the hook to the tail. Next, wrap the thread forward to marker.
- 5) Wrap the burlap forward in touching turns to the marker. Tie off and rough up the burlap with your Velcro stick or bore cleaning brush.
- 6) Select a soft hackle feather long enough for the tips of the barbs to reach the point of the hook. Wind the hackle several turns forward and tie it off.
- 7) Tie back on the hackle to form a slant of 45 degrees. Form a small, tapered head and apply cement.

The Burlap fly was developed by Arnold Arana in 1945 for the Klamath River where it is still popular and used extensively today. The pattern is a reliable producer and provides a good pattern for any of the areas low, clear waters this time of year when fish become spooky. Steelhead can only enter larger river systems open to the sea and characterized by lower and stable water flows.

The rule of “day, dark fly and bright day, bright fly” still applies but in a more subtle way with only slight changes in tail and collar materials necessary. Hook sizes will vary depending on water levels and fish size in different regions. For deeper runs and pools a larger more heavily weighted fly can be drifted near the bottom. At times, steelhead will not rise through a lot of water to pursue a “” fly. The real problem is to put the fly in front of a fish that will bite. So presentation can be critical. The Burlap is a simple pattern with only three ingredients, so tie some up, give them a test flight and let me know how you did. I will have a couple of half-dozen samples in the raffle so buy those tickets at the next club meeting.

## TYING TIPS

The possibility for variation with fishing success goes beyond just size and color. Try using solid color hackle collars such as browns, grays or olive. Matching hackle barbs work well for tailing, in fact the original used natural grizzly. Burlap material is usually a uniform thickness, so if you wish to create a tapered body, wrap an underbody of the desired shape first. A popular variation from British Columbia is known as the Sack Fly and substitutes a tail of bright-orange hackle feathers.

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