

On The Fly

December 2006

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

PATTERN OF THE MONTH-The Spruce

Hook: Streamer, 3X or 4X long, size 10 to 1/0.
Thread: Black 6/0.
Tail: Peacock sword, 3-5 depending on hook size.
Body: Rear 1/3 of red floss; front 2/3 of peacock herl.
Wing: Badger hackle feathers.
Hackle: Badger, tied wet style.



Tying Instructions:

- 1) Start the thread two eye-lengths behind the eye. This is the thread base for the body material and the marker for the hackle tie-in point. Wind a thread base back to just above the point of the hook.
- 2) Tie in the peacock sword as the tail. Tail should extend $\frac{1}{2}$ the shank length.
- 3) Tie in the red floss, advance the thread to the 1/3-shank-length position, then wind the floss forward to the hanging thread. Tie off and trim the floss.
- 4) Tie in several strands of peacock herl at this spot.
- 5) Wrap the herl over the shank and around the thread in a counterclockwise direction. Wind the reinforced peacock forward the remaining 2/3 shank length. Tie off and trim.
- 6) Select two matching badger hackles. Place the feathers' shiny sides together so that they will splay out. Measure the length so tips reach past the end of the tail. Trim away excess fluff and barbs at the front of hackles. Hold the matching hackles between your thumb and forefinger while setting them on top of the hook shank. Secure the hackles with several wraps of thread winding towards the eye.
- 7) Select a full badger hackle, tie it in at its tip with the barbs curved back, and then wind it forward forming a full collar. Tie off the hackle, form a neat head, whip finish and apply head cement.

The Spruce fly was designed around 1918 by brothers Bert and Milo Godfrey who owned a hardware store in Seaside, Oregon. The first Spruce fly was reportedly tied by Bert on a #8 sproat fly hook. The pattern evolved into a streamer when anglers began extending its use to resident trout and steelhead. Quickly gaining a reputation as a deadly pattern along the Pacific Coast, the Spruce soon became a favorite throughout the west. Over the years the Spruce has been tied on standard wet fly hooks, streamer hooks of all lengths, steelhead irons, and even double hooks used for half-pounders on the Rogue. The secret to its success seems to be a combination of classic Royal Coachman colors and the enticing scissor-like action of the splayed badger hackle wings.

Through the years, tiers have dressed the Spruce to reflect their individual tying styles without substituting any of the original materials. You will see different Spruce patterns with different herl-to-floss ratios, wing tied body length and others tied with hackle tips extending beyond the tail. Badger necks vary in overall color and center stripe width, making for a great many alternative looks for the pattern. Through it all, however, the Spruce remains effective and aesthetically pleasing. So tie some up, give them a test flight and let me know how you do.

TYING TIPS

Another reminder about peacock herl: The material is deadly but fragile. Winding it around the thread or adding a fine wire rib is a must. When you tie in the peacock-sword tail, wrap the thread over the butts 1/3 up the shank to ensure a smooth floss section. When you tie off the peacock herl at the front of the body, do not use too many thread wraps because that results in a bump making the attainment of the proper wing angle almost impossible. Substitute purple chenille for the front 2/3 body, add a red hackle fiber tail, and you have tied the Purple Joe, a very good pattern for sea-run cutthroat and summer steelhead.