

# On The Fly

## December 2011

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

### PATTERN OF THE MONTH-Skykomish Sunrise

Hook: Daiichi 2441, Salmon/Steelhead, 4-8.  
Thread: 6-0 red.  
Tag: Flat silver tinsel, small  
Tail: Red over yellow, Golden Pheasant crest.  
Rib: Oval silver tinsel, small.  
Body: Red seal sub.  
Hackle: Red over yellow saddle.  
Wing: White kid goat.  
Head: Tying thread.



#### Tying Instructions:

**Step 1:** Mash the barb and mount the hook in the vise.

**Step 2:** Start the thread one eye width behind the eye and lay down an even thread base to a position just above the hook point.

**Step 3:** Tie in the flat tinsel at this point. Wind rearward 4 turns and then forward 4 turns. Tie off and trim excess.

**Step 4:** Select a yellow crest feather, measure 2/3 body length, and tie on with the curve up at the front end of the tag. Repeat the process with the red color. Trim the excess at the front end of the body area and tie down on top of the shank with spiral wraps forward and back.

**Step 5:** Tie in a length of oval tinsel at the base of the tail and leave hang to the rear for the rib later.

**Step 6:** Form a dubbing loop at the base of the tail, advance the thread to the front of the body, insert the red seal sub sparsely into the loop, twist the loop into a rope, and wind the dubbing rope forward to the thread location. Tie off and trim.

**Step 7:** Wind the rib forward over the body with 5 evenly spaced spiral turns. Tie off and trim excess.

**Step 8:** Select a yellow hackle feather with barbs reaching almost to the hook point, tie in by the tip, and wind forward 3 turns while stroking the barbs rearward on each half turn. Tie off and trim excess. Repeat the process with the red hackle feather in front of the yellow.

**Step 9:** Select a small bunch of kid goat hair from the hide, do not stack, measure length from the end of the tail, and tie on just in front of the hackle. Tie off with tight turns and trim the excess at an angle toward the eye.

**Step 10:** Use a drop of super glue to secure the wing to the shank, then form a neat tapered head and cement.

The birth of the Skykomish Sunrise pattern goes back to 1938, though there are conflicting accounts of it's history. It was created by father and son Steelheaders, Ken and George McLeod of Seattle for the winter runs, and tied as a gift for George's brother. Of course it was named for and inspired by the beautiful sunrises on the Skykomish River in Western Washington State. In the 1950's McLeod himself set a fly rod world record catching a 29 pound steelhead on the fly. Since then the Skykomish Sunrise has been a staple for Steelheaders throughout the Northwest and into the Great Lakes area. This fly is tied with traditional bright, flashy red and white materials in order to gain the fish's attention in the often cold, murky flows of winter and spring. Originally tied with Polar Bear for the wing and a chenille body, the version pictured above is a modern twist that I prefer.

The fly sinks quickly and a well-tied pattern will ride smooth and proper in rougher currents. Fish it with a wet fly swing, casting up and across stream. For the fanatical winter steelhead fly fisher a good day is 40 degrees and nasty. That's when thousand of these hearty and seemingly foolish fish come up streams while most other fish in the region are doing nothing at all. There is not a more crazed fisher than the winter steelhead fly fisher. Here's your fly.

#### Tying Tips

There are several material substitutions that will make this pattern doable for any tier. Sub saddle hackle barbs for the tail and chenille for the body. Leave off the tag if you want and use calf, fox, or buck tail for the wing. The result should be just as effective using common materials. Use a heavy gauge wire hook and keep it somewhat sparse. You want it to sink down in front of that steely.

So tie some up, give them a test flight, and let me know how you do.