

On The Fly

February 2008

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

PATTERN OF THE MONTH: March Brown Soft Hackle

Hook: Daiichi 1270, curved nymph hook, 3X long, size 14.
Thread: Brown 6/0.
Weight: Five wraps of 30-mil lead wire under thorax.
Tail: Wood duck flank.
Abdomen: Beaver dubbing.
Rib: Fine copper wire.
Thorax: Hare's mask, dark or olive.
Hackle: Partridge.
Head: Red (indicating weighted). Black (unweighted).



Tying Instructions:

- 1) Start the thread one eye-width behind the eye and wind rearward laying down a thread base to just above the barb.
- 2) Wind five wraps of lead wire over the front third of the thread base area. Bind down the lead with thread wraps and cement.
- 3) Select a small bunch of wood duck flank barbs, measure them to be one shank-length long, and tie them in on top just above the barb. Trim the butts.
- 4) Tie on the copper wire ribbing and let it hang.
- 5) Dub the beaver on the thread and wind it forward to form a tapered abdomen covering the rear 2/3 of the body and tie off.
- 6) Wind the ribbing forward over the abdomen in four evenly spaced turns. Tie off and trim.
- 7) Dub the hares mask to the thread and wind it forward over the lead to form a thorax. Tie off and trim.
- 8) Select a partridge hackle feather with barbs as long as the hook. Prepare the feather, attach it at its tip and wind it forward 1½ turns. Tie off and trim butts. Tie back slightly with the thread wraps to force the barbs towards the rear at a 45 degree angle.
- 9) Change to red thread if you tie this weighted, form a neat tapered head, whip-finish the thread and apply cement.

In our western waters the March Browns are the first “easy to see” hatch of the new season. These hatches on local rivers will begin when water temperatures consistently reach 42 degrees and start as early as mid-February, and continue through March and early April. March Brown nymphs live in riffles and fast rocky runs. As the nymphs mature, they migrate into slower water where some nymphs lose their grip and drift in the current and are taken by watchful trout. As the water warms at mid-day, the nymphs rise towards the surface and some are intercepted by trout. A March Brown soft hackle tied to a dropper about three feet above the nymph can pay extra dividends.

As the duns begin to hatch, trout will rise toward the surface to catch them. Often the rise starts quiet as trout pick off the emergers just below the surface. Some duns will emerge from their shuck slightly below the surface. At this time a March Brown soft hackle fished just below the surface may be your best bet. Remember the best fly is the one that is perfectly placed in the risers feeding lane.

TYING TIPS

You can vary the hook size and body color to match the naturals. Most important is to keep this fly sparse and trim, half a dozen barbs for the tail and only 1 to 1½ turns of partridge for the hackle. The lead wire under the thorax is optional depending on the current speed and depth you want to fish. This is a fairly simple pattern using common materials, so tie some up, give them a test flight, and let me know how you do.