

On The Fly

January 2005

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

PATTERN OF THE MONTH: Kaufmann's Stimulator

Hook: 2X or 3X long dry fly, TMC 200R, Mustad 79580, size 4 - 16
Thread: Orange 6/0 or 3/0
Tail: Elk or deer body hair
Abdomen: Yellow/orange dubbing
Rib: Brown or grizzly hackle, palmer style, smaller than hook size.
Thorax: Orange dubbing
Wing: Elk
Hackle: Grizzly over thorax, dry fly style



Tying Instructions:

- 1) Tie in a clump of elk or deer for the tail, extending the tail beyond the bend of the hook about 1½ times the hook gape.
- 2) Tie in brown or grizzly hackle for a palmer rib and dub a tapered yellow/orange body forward to about 2/3 the length of the shank.
- 3) Wrap the hackle forward, palmer style over the abdomen. Tie off and tie in the wing of elk hair such that the end of the wing is even with the bend of the hook.
- 4) Tie in a second hackle and dub the thorax forward to just behind the hook eye.
- 5) Wrap the hackle forward, dry fly style, and tie off.
- 6) Whip finish and go fishing.

This month's pattern is a great all-around attractor fly and works so well it should be included in your fly box. Kaufmann's Stimulator is nationally heralded, is almost worshiped in the American West, and has an international following from New Zealand to the mountains of Sweden. The fly is truly an attractor for all occasions and can be fished in sizes 4 to 16, with features of both stoneflies and caddis, but also works as a hopper imitation.

What makes the Stimulator so effective? When asked that question Randall Kaufmann stated that he honestly didn't know but said "The Stimulator may be just different enough that fish do not remember having an earlier encounter with it and mistake it for real food." He also admits that it is not unique, but is kind of a composite of "parts" from other effective flies. In the new millennium, there are very few things that are truly brand new. In fact, genius is often in the ability to synthesize, rather than create.

So why does the Stimulator work? According to Randall "By tying it wide (spreading out its tail and wing) and tall with the wing spread upward, the fly creates the illusion of bulk and the blurred or fluttering image of wing movement. Palmered hackle adds to this illusion, and it should be stiff and tapered, smaller at the tail area. These features, along with fishing them when they are in good condition, ensures they react to tiny individual currents, portraying a buoyant, animated natural insect."

If you fish anywhere in the west, or New Zealand to Sweden, and haven't tied up some Stimulators, try it this year. Stimulators are easy to tie and by varying the color combinations and sizes, they offer almost a full fly box of variety. Yellow is an excellent all around color but orange, olive, and black can be very effective. The all-black version is particularly effective and quite visible at dusk. You can also consider changing hackle colors. I prefer using grizzly for the body hackle but some tiers swear by brown hackle. On occasion I will change the thorax hackle to brown dyed grizzly, dark dun or olive dyed grizzly.

Whatever the Stimulator is doesn't really matter. What does matter is that the fly works and works very well. Tie some up and take them out for a test flight.