

On The Fly

January 2011

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

PATTERN OF THE MONTH-Peacock Herl Midge

Hook: Daiichi 1140, Midge/Emerger, size 18 - 22
Thread: 8-0 black.
Abdomen: Stripped Peacock herl.
Thorax: Peacock herl.
Head: 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 halfway down the bend.

Step 3: Select one stripped peacock herl, clip off one inch of the fragile tip section, and tie in at the bend half-way point. Wrap the thread to a position 1/3 shank length from the eye. Wind the stripped herl forward in touching turns to the thread hanging position. Tie off and trim the excess.

Step 4: Select one regular Peacock herl and tie in at the base of the abdomen, grab the herl strand, take one wrap over the shank, and wrap it around the thread three times. Now grab the herl and the thread between your fingers and wind the herl rope forward 4 turns forming the thorax. Tie off and trim the excess.

Step 5: Form a small neat head, whip finish and cement.

This month's pattern, the Peacock Midge, is simple but effective. There is no question about the effectiveness of Peacock herl on any fly. One hook, some thread, and one material definitely qualifies it as simple to tie. The only challenges are the small size and the body quill prep. I have even included the methods below. Midges are the most abundant trout food source in the colder winter months on the Rogue. On February 26th Rich Fiebelkorn will be hosting a Holy Water midge fishing outing. He will even show you how to fish the critters. Sounds to me like all you have to do is spend a little time at the vise, dress warm, and show up.

Preparing the stripped herl.

Before your Peacock herl is ready to be used as a quill, you must remove the tiny fibers which are on the black edge. The simplest and most direct approach is to remove them by hand. These are best for small quantities of quills. One method is to remove the flue by gently stripping it with your thumbnail, stroking it gently against the grain from tip to butt. It may take several light strokes to remove all the fibers. The second method is somewhat faster and requires the use of a course ink eraser. Lay the herl on the tabletop, hold down by the tip and rub the eraser tip to butt against the grain. Turn the herl over and repeat until clean. If larger numbers are needed you may want to try the chemical bleaching method. The burning solution is a 50/50 mix of bleach and water and involves immerse an entire eye section for 20 to 30 seconds. Remove, rinse under clear water, and check if any fibers remain. Repeat if necessary for another 10 seconds and rinse again.

TYING TIPS

No matter what method you use to strip the quills, the prepared material should be soaked in water before using. Soaking renders them soft, pliable, and much easier to wrap around the shank without breaking or splitting. If you plan to tie several dozen flies at a time, unused quill can be stored in a covered jar of water and kept for several months. So tie some up, give them a test flight, and let me know how you do.