

On The Fly

June 2007

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

PATTERN OF THE MONTH: Johnny O

Hook: Tiemco 200R or equivalent.
Thread: 8/0 black.
Eyes: Dark brown glass beads, barbell style on mono.
Tag & rib: Small Liquid Lace or Larva Lace, light brown.
Tail: Hot orange hackle fibers.
Body: Pheasant tail fibers.
Thorax: Brown ostrich.
Wing case: Pheasant tail fibers.
Legs: Pheasant rump hackle.



Tying Instructions:

- 1) Start the thread one eye length behind the eye. Tie on the eyes using the figure-eight method. Wind a thread base back to just above the barb of the hook.
- 2) Tie in the Larva Lace and wind it forward to a point just above the point of the hook. Tie off but don't trim because the Larva Lace will also serve as our rib.
- 3) Tie in a clump of hot orange hackle fibers up against the tag so the fibers cock up. The tail should reach to the bend of the hook.
- 4) Tie in several pheasant tail fibers, twist them into the thread and wind forward about 2/3 shank length. Do not trim off the butt ends, they will be used for the wing case.
- 5) Tie in four ostrich fibers, twist them into the thread and wind forward to the back of the eyes to form a fuzzy thorax.
- 6) Wind the rib forward in equally-spaced turns over the body and thorax, and tie off.
- 7) Select a pheasant rump hackle feather with barb long enough to reach the hook length. Tie it in by the tip and wind it forward two turns. Tie off.
- 8) Separate the hackle fibers at the top of the hook, putting equal amount on both sides, and then pull the pheasant tail fibers (from Step 4) over the thorax and hackle to form the wing case. Tie off in front of the eyes and trim.
- 9) Form a neat thread head, whip-finish and apply head cement.

The Johnny O was developed by Johnny Hale and fittingly named by his friends on his last fishing trip. The pattern evolved from a lifetime of tinkering and experimenting at the tying desk. Those of us who knew Johnny, or watched him tie, or took his classes, could count on the fact that he hardly ever tied the exact same fly more than twice. That's what makes this pattern so unusual. Over the past four months he tied dozens the same, varying only the color of materials and size. I had never seen him so enthused about a pattern before. He truly believed it had the best qualities of a great nymph and it worked. On his first trial it caught trout. It's a good reminder to all of us: use materials that are proven attractors, make it buggy, get it down in front of the fish, and fish the fly with confidence. So tie some up, give them a test flight, and let me know how you did.

TYING TIPS

Like Johnny, you can vary the colors, size, and even materials used. Be creative; don't get lulled into using exact copies of what you see in a book. Once you learn the concept of a pattern or technique use the materials and colors you have on hand. Who knows, you may come up with the next miracle pattern.