

On The Fly

May 2006

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

PATTERN OF THE MONTH: Gray Hackle Peacock

Hook: TMC 5210, #12-20; TMC 100, #22-28.

Thread: Black 6/0 (use 8/0 for #20 and smaller hooks).

Tail: Stiff grizzly hackle fibers.

Body: Use from two to six peacock herls depending on fly size.

Rib: Fine silver wire on larger sizes, black thread on smaller.

Hackle: Two grizzly hackle feathers, 1½ times hook gap.



Tying Instructions:

- 1) Start the thread one eye length behind the eye. This is your marker for starting a neat tapered head. Wind the thread back to the bend of the hook.
- 2) Select a dozen stiff grizzly hackle fibers, measure them to one-shank-length long and attach the fibers to the hook just above the barb. Use fewer fibers on the smaller hooks.
- 3) At this same point, tie in the silver wire and the proper quantity of peacock herl, then wind the thread forward to the midpoint of the hook shank.
- 4) Twist the herl counter-clockwise around the thread and wind the thread-herl forward to the thread marker. Then tie off the thread-herl.
- 5) Counter wrap the wire forward to the marker and tie off the wire.
- 6) Select two hackle feathers whose fiber length is 1½ times the gap. Prepare the feathers and attach them to the hook with dull (undersides) facing forward.
- 7) Wrap the thread forward to the head marker. Wind the first hackle forward in tightly spaced turns to that point, then tie it off and trim it. Wind the second hackle forward, then tie it off and trim it.
- 8) Form a neat tapered head, whip finish, and apply cement.

The Gray Hackle Peacock is another of those flies whose origins are concealed somewhere in the long history of flyfishing. I suspect that it is simply a floating version of a wet fly used for centuries. Whatever its beginning, the Gray Hackle Peacock is an effective searching pattern.

Exactly what this fly suggests to trout is also open to question. In the larger sizes it may represent, in a crude way, a drake or perhaps a big terrestrial. On tiny hooks it fishes well during hatches of dark midges in any weather. The more recent Griffith's Gnat, everyone's favorite dry midge pattern these days, is tied with the same combination of materials.

For the beginner and intermediate tier as well, standard dry flies can be a struggle. There seems to be a huge amount of material to fit into a tiny space, and the head gets crowded as a consequence. Paying attention to proper proportioning is crucial, since standard dry flies depend on proper sizing of their components to cock and float appropriately. Correct proportion also ensures that there will be room enough to tie a neat tapered head, the hallmark of a well-tied fly. For the novice tyer the Gray Hackle Peacock is a good starting point for dries, since there are no wings to contend with and there are only three materials. It's an easy tie and it works, so tie up a dozen, give them a good test flight and let me know how you do.

TYING TIPS

The fibers for the tail of this fly can be found on feathers located along the middle of the sides of the cape. They are stiff with very little web. When you attach the two hackle feathers, secure them ahead of the body and underneath the shank leaving enough bare stem to make ¼ to ½ turn without winding down any fibers. After you secure the hackle feathers “crease” the stem by pulling it perpendicular to the hook shank. This step will help the hackle to orient and wrap properly. Lastly, when you wind the second hackle forward, take one turn behind the first turn of the first hackle. Use a rocking or side-to-side motion to slip the stem into place without binding down the fibers of the first hackle.