

On The Fly

May 2007

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

PATTERN OF THE MONTH-Timberline Emerger

Hook: Long-shank wet-fly, sizes 6 – 12.
Thread: 8/0, color to match body.
Tail: Marabou, in olive, brown, black or gray.
Body: Shaggy dubbing such as Angora or seal substitute, color to match tail.
Rib: Copper wire.
Collar: Neck hackle, color to match body.
Wings: Two grizzly hen hackles.



Tying Instructions:

- 1) Start the thread one eye length behind the eye. Wind a thread base back to just above the barb of the hook.
- 2) Tie in a clump of marabou on top of the hook to form a one-shank-length long tail. Tie in the copper ribbing wire and pull it back out of the way.
- 3) Form a dubbing loop with the thread and insert the shaggy dubbing material then twist the loop to form a dubbing rope. Wind the dubbing rope forward to create a tapered body. Tie off.
- 4) Counter-wrap the copper wire in four even-spaced turns. Tie off.
- 5) Tie in the hackle by the tip and wind it forward in three turns to create the collar. Tie off.
- 6) Select two matching grizzly hen hackle feathers and prepare them so the tips reach the base of the tail. Tie them in back-to-back and curving out.
- 7) Form a thread head, whip-finish and apply head cement.

The Timberline Emerger was developed by Randall Kaufman in the mid 1960s to tempt finicky trout in the High Sierra backcountry timberline lakes. Randall found that what looked like surface activity was actually subsurface feeding on emerging insects. The dry fly approach was a waste of time and the wet flies of that era seemed to turn the fish away. After much experimenting through trial and error, what was to be named the Timberline Emerger, succeeded with dramatic results. It consistently took trout over many years and is still popular. Success can be contributed to the natural grizzly hen hackle tip wings. Their subtle barring along with their soft, water-absorbing quality and wide outline seem to be a winning combination. This pattern is not an exact imitation of the caddis pupa or hatching mayfly, but it is of reasonable size, shape and color to fool many trout. You should let the Timberline Emerger sink to the feeding depth and use a slow, hand-twist retrieve: this is the key to hooking up with trout in the lakes of our own Cascades. So, tie some up, give them a test flight, and let me know how you do.

TYING TIPS

The Timberline Emerger is moderately easy to tie and uses common materials. It is important to leave enough space behind the head area for the hackle collar and wings to be tied in without crowding. The angle and length of the hackle should also be noted to maintain proper proportions. Hackle tips should extend back to the point of the hook and the angle should be 45 degrees. In this case the hackle represents legs and should be kept sparse, too much can affect sinking and swimming qualities.