

On The Fly

May 2009

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

PATTERN OF THE MONTH: Clark's Stonefly

Hook: Daiichi 1280 or equivalent, 2X long dry fly, size 8-10 hook.
Thread: Orange 6/0.
Body: Gold flat tinsel.
Underwing: Rust and gold poly yarn, combed to blend colors.
Wing: Deer or elk hair.
Hackle: Brown saddle.
Head: Tying thread.



Tying Instructions:

- 1) Mash the hook barb, put the hook into your vise, start the thread behind the eye and lay down a thread base on the shank to just above the barb of the hook. Spiral the thread forward to the 2/3 point on the shank (1/3 back from the eye).
- 2) Tie in a length of tinsel at the 2/3 point by securing it from the top of the shank back to the position above the barb. Then spiral the thread forward to the 2/3 position. Wind the tinsel forward in slightly overlapping turns. Tie off the tinsel and trim excess.
- 3) Tie in the combed and blended poly yarn atop the hook at the front of the body. The back end of the yarn should not extend more than ¼ inch past the bend of the hook. Trim the tag end of the poly yarn at the front.
- 4) Firmly select a bundle of deer or elk hair from the hide at the base of the fibers. Do not stack the hair. Place the hair wing over the poly yarn with the tips of the wing extending 1/4 inch beyond the end of the yarn. Secure the wing in place with thread wraps then trim the butts down to a taper. Cover the tapered butts with thread wraps to form a smooth base for the hackle.
- 5) Select a brown hackle feather sized to the hook and tie it in at the front of the wing. Wind the hackle feather forward three or four turns. Tie off and trim.
- 6) Form a neat tapered thread head. Whip-finish the thread and apply cement.
- 7) Cut a V-notch at the bottom of the hackle to give a lower profile when the fly sits on the water.

After you finish tying a few dozen of last month's Stimulator flies, you should start on this month's pattern. That's because the golden stonefly hatch happens right at the end of the salmonfly hatch. At that time you will need them both in your fly box. Clark's Stonefly was developed by Lee Clark, a long time Oregon Fly tier, in the 1980s when most stonefly patterns were being tied heavier and more dense. That's when Lee made his imitation lighter. It floats like a feather and works when nothing else will. The hook shank is camouflaged with flat tinsel in the surface film. The poly fibers trap air between them and float like a strike indicator, and additional floatation is gained by the dense deer or elk hair collar hackle. Clark's Stonefly has always worked best when insects are very active and abundant on the water.

This pattern combines its effectiveness with the ease of tying, unmatched by other patterns. It requires only a basic knowledge of fly tying to produce a quality fly that works. It should be fished like most standard dry fly patterns, quartering upstream with a long and drag-free float.

TYING TIPS

The only advice or tip I can give you on tying this pattern is about securing the hair wing. If you use thread wraps that are too tight at first, the wing will flare and spread into an unruly mess, looking nothing like a stonefly natural. The trick is to keep a death grip on the hair bunch while wrapping the first few turns of thread with lighter tension. Tighter, securing wraps, must be applied forward of the first few wraps to prevent the flaring. Changing the underwing to orange will create a very effective salmonfly pattern if the Stimulator quits working. So tie some up, give them a test flight, and let me know how you do.