

On The Fly

November 2004

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

PATTERN OF THE MONTH - Freight Train Krystal Flash

Hook. Size 8 - 2 steelhead/salmon.
Thread. Black 6/0.
Tail. Purple hackle barbs.
Body, Rear ¼ Fluorescent red/orange floss.
Body, Second ¼ Fluorescent red floss.
Body, Front ½ Black chenille.
Rib. Fine oval silver tinsel.
Collar. Purple hackle.
Wing. Blue krystal flash over which is pearl krystal flash.



Tying Instructions:

1. Tie on in front and wrap thread base to just before the hook point.
2. Tie in a small bunch of purple hackle barbs ½ the body length, then tie in the tinsel.
3. Tie in the red/orange floss ¼ body length; the red floss ¼ body length; the remainder in black chenille.
4. Wind the tinsel forward 5 even turns and tie off.
5. Tie in the soft purple hackle 3 - 4 turns for a collar and wind back on barbs to achieve the proper angle.
6. Tie in a small bunch of blue krystal flash, then, on top of that, a small bunch of pearl krystal flash for the wing.
7. Form a small head, whip finish and cement.

The Freight Train was originated by Randall Kaufman in the late 70's and evolved in the early 80's when Randall was operating a fly fishing school on the Deschutes River in Central Oregon. The original sported a white calf tail wing. Later versions used flashabou and finally a krystal flash wing. Then Randall designed the Coal Car, a darker version of the Freight Train, a mostly black fly and most effective on dark overcast days or at dusk. This combination doesn't seem to spook fish but has enough color to grab their attention. In 1989 Randall Kaufman introduced his version of the Green Butt Skunk, the Flat Car. It too is most effective at dusk, shows a bulky silhouette and its fluorescent green stays effective in fading or low-light conditions. The last pattern in his "Railroad" series was the Signal Light, named for the colorful signal lights along the Deschutes River railroad tracks. This purple and black pattern again offers good visibility under low-light conditions and off-color water.

On all four of these patterns you can vary the size and dress according to conditions. Randall has suggested that flies be underdressed for summer steelhead, the rear section of the two-part body can be tied in as a tag with an under-wrap of tinsel for that glow when wet. I've also seen the series tied as great looking spey flies. Give them a try on the Rogue for steelhead this winter and let me know how they work.

Tying Tips - Wild Marabou

I just finished some marabou steelhead flies to restock my flybox. We all know that dampening these fluffy devils makes handling much easier. But keeping a bowl of water on the bench for dipping the fingers is an accident waiting to happen and licking your fingers repeatedly can be very unhealthy. I keep a small spray bottle of water on the bench (an emptied bottle of eyeglass lens cleaner works perfect for this task). It sprays a fine mist, it's refillable, and it's small and travels well in a portable kit. Give it a try.