

On The Fly

November 2005

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

PATTERN OF THE MONTH-Sly's Midge

Hook Standard or 1X short, size 16-18.
Thread Black, 8/0.
Body Peacock herl.
Hackle Gray Partridge, 1 turn.



Tying Instructions:

- 1) Start the thread at a position on the hook shank that allows the proper room for the head. Use this as a marker and don't tie anything past this mark. Wrap a thread base back to a position just above the hook barb.
- 2) Tie in a Peacock herl at this point, advance the thread and wind the herl forward and tie it off.
- 3) Tie in the Partridge hackle, make one turn, then tie it off.
- 4) Form a neat small head, whip finish, and cement.

With the winter months ahead of us, many fly fishers are counting down the days until they can get out and wet a line again, while others are fishing the one bug that hatches year round, the mighty midge. Midges are an abundant source of food giving trout thousands of opportunities to feed. Even in sub-freezing temperatures midges often hatch in the warm microlayer of air just above the water's surface.

Pursuing trout in the wintertime is a unique experience filled with its own challenges. The cold wind and icy water can numb fingers to the point where knot tying can seem almost impossible. Trout behave differently in the frigid waters, shifting to slower pools and seeking protection in the depths, near logs, or undercuts. They become reluctant to move far for a meal and when hooked are less inclined to jump choosing instead to hold deep and shake their heads. Your fishing tactics should slow too. The best results will come from keeping things small, discrete, and at a snail's pace.

Your fly selection should consist of size 16 or smaller and include midge patterns to imitate all four stages of development. Having some flies weighted with small glass bead heads, will keep them down at the level of the fish.

This month's pattern, Sly's Midge, imitates the emerging stage and is fished in the film just below the surface. The fly was originated by Sylvester Nemes from Bozeman, Montana, and is one of his many soft-hackle patterns. Sylvester is largely responsible for the popularity of this sparsely dressed style of fly in North America via his three books on the subject.

This very effective winter pattern is an easy tie, with only two parts: the body and a hackle. Peacock is always deadly, but the body material and color can be substituted for a match. Try some soft hen feather or grouse for the hackle. Tie some up, bundle up, and give them a good test flight. Let me know how you do.

TYING TIPS - Hard-to-find feathers

It is difficult to find partridge feathers small enough for these winter-size soft-hackle patterns in size 16 or smaller. Therefore, it is advisable to tie the hackle tip to the hook instead of tying the hackle stem to the hook. The barboles near the tip are shorter and the stem is more pliable for winding.