

# On The Fly

November 2007

"Fly tying is a school from which we never graduate"

## PATTERN OF THE MONTH – Copper John

Hook: Standard nymph, TMC 5262, 5263 or equivalent; Size 10-18.  
Thread: 6/0 or 8/0 black.  
Head: gold bead.  
Weight: 20-mil lead wire.  
Tail: biots, brown or black.  
Body: medium copper wire.  
Thorax: Peacock herl.  
Legs: Partridge  
Wingcase: Thin Skin with Flashabou center stripe.



### Tying Instructions:(for size 12 hook)

- 1) Slide a 1/8 inch gold bead onto the hook with the countersunk hole facing away from the eye.
- 2) Wind four wraps of 20-mil lead wire behind the bead. Trim the ends and slide the wrap into the hole. A drop of cement will help secure the position.
- 3) Start the thread on the bare hook shank and form a tapered transition to the bead. End the thread wraps to just above the barb.
- 4) Tie a biot on each side of the hook with each biot curving away from the shank. Trim the biot butts and continue to smooth the body with thread buildup.
- 5) Tie in the copper wire just behind the bead on the underside of the shank. Wind the thread back towards the bend while keeping the wire underneath the hook shank. Stop the thread at tail tie-in position, then wind the thread forward to just behind the bead.
- 6) Wind the copper wire in close wraps forward to just behind the bead. Tie off the wire and trim it.
- 7) Apply a single strand of Flashabou to the top of the thorax area. Tie in a narrow strip of Thinskin on top of the flash.
- 8) Tie in 3 strands of peacock herl, wrap it around the thread and wind it forward to form the thorax. Tie off and trim excess.
- 9) Select a partridge feather with even tips and clip out the center stem 1/4 inch down from the tip, and position the feather on top of the thorax. Take loose wraps of thread to hold the feather in place, and then pull the butt of the stem forward until the legs are the proper length. Secure with tight wraps and trim the excess.
- 10) Fold the Thinskin forward over the thorax and secure it just behind the bead. Pull the Flashabou forward over the center of the wingcase and secure it in the same spot. Trim the butt ends and whip-finish the thread. Use a drop of epoxy or Softex on the wingcase.

The Copper John was developed by John Barr of Boulder, Colorado in 1996. By 2001 it was the number one selling fly in the Umpqua catalog and now is said to be the best selling fly in the nation. With lead and copper wire and a flash of color to accentuate the basic mayfly profile, this pattern dives quickly to the zone where the fish feed and hold. Although it plunges quickly to the desired depth it drifts much more naturally than a nymph with a split shot pinched to the leader. Even with its impressive sink rate it maintains an enticing profile that seems to imitate a wide variety of insects.

With a wide selection of copper wire colors available for you to use, the variations are many. Match the size and color to insects that are emerging. Green seems to correlate to caddis activity, chartreuse works well as a general attractor, red in smaller sizes can imitate Chironomid larvae, and silver with a silver bead, can flash like a bait fish. The latest variation has rubber legs for some realistic movement. So tie some up, give them a test flight and let me know how you do.

### TYING TIPS

- 1) After you tie off and trim the copper wire, wrap the thread towards the rear over the copper wire only enough to define the thorax area.
- 2) When you twist the herl around the tying thread you add durability to the fragile herl.
- 3) The length of the legs should be about twice the length of the thorax.
- 4) If you use epoxy on the wingcase, tie up a half dozen or so flies before mixing up a batch of epoxy.