



Spring Creek Flycraft and Guide Service

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Fly Tyers Corner December, 2012 Bill's Gray Meme

by Bill Carnazzo

Using your online dictionary, look up the word "meme." I've been using this little fly for nigh onto 30 years now, all the while trying to figure out why, despite its plain, bland appearance, it fools fish so regularly. Maybe it is a meme, a "trout whisperer" with a knack for palavering with trout: "Here I am; I am good food, come and eat me..." maybe?

Whatever. Along with some of the other patterns I've written about here and elsewhere, it is one of the secret, sneaky inhabitants of my fly box...always. When I'm pawing through the box and spot it, the darn little critter talks to me, too: "Gimme a try, dummy. No! Size 16, not 14." And so I do, and sometimes (not always) I'm glad I did. It's somewhat of a "retro" thing for me, I guess, when a trout eats it — a return to the days when flies were simple, unencumbered, and named for their color. The only thing newish about this little guy is the name. Still, look through modern fly pattern books, catalogs and other tying literature, and you will likely find nothing resembling my little friend, who seems to have been left far, far behind along the dusty road to the land of the new glitzy generation of flies.

So humor me and crank out some of these retro trout whisperers and house them in your fly box. They'll talk to you, so be prepared for that—but they'll also talk to trout if you dress them up well and don't skimp on the materials called for.

Materials

Hook: Any standard nymph hook, such as Tiemco 3761, size 14-18
Thread: Black or grey 8/0, or 70 denier flat nylon
Bead: None
Weight: None
Tail: Wood duck flank feather barbules
Rib: Fine gold wire

Abdomen: Natural (not synthetic) spiky dubbing (muskrat, cut from the skin, works fine)
Wing case: Mottled turkey tail strip
Thorax: Same as abdomen
Legs: Same as tail
Head: Thread

Tying Instructions

1. De-barb the hook and place it in your vise. Beginning behind the hook eye, cover the hook shank with a smooth, single layer of thread, leaving the thread just above the back of the barb.
2. Cut approximately six barbules from a well-marked wood duck flank feather. Don't use the fluffy stuff near the bottom of the feather shaft; rather, use the stiffer, brighter barbules near the top of the feather. Keeping them directly on top of the hook shank, tie them in securely at the spot where you left the thread hanging and trim the excess.
3. At the same point, tie in a short piece of gold wire and leave the thread there.



4. Apply small amounts of the natural fur dubbing to the thread; don't use too much as small insects have thin, delicate bodies. To form the abdomen, wrap the dubbing forward to about the one-third point on the hook shank behind the hook eye and stop there. Try to achieve a taper from rear to front, as this is the natural insect's shape. Using your hackle pliers, grasp the gold wire and wrap it up the abdomen in even segments—4 wraps will do. Tie the wire off at the front of the abdomen and leave the thread there.



5. Cut a 1/4" trip of mottled turkey quill feather and tie it in directly on top of the hook at the front of the abdomen, with the butt end sticking out to the rear past the hook bend. Be sure that there is no gap between the front of the abdomen and the tied-in turkey quill.
6. Dub the thorax, making it a bit more robust than the abdomen. End the dubbing about one hook eye length behind the hook eye. This will leave room for the remaining steps and a nice small head.
7. Using the same wood duck flank feather, cut a 1/2" bunch of barbules from the stem near the top of the feather. Measure them against the shank, so that they reach from the hook eye back to the hook point—no longer than that. Place them on the top of the shank and take two loose turns around them; pull the thread downward on the far side of the hook, releasing pressure on the barbules as you do so. This will enable them to distribute themselves half way around the hook shank, leaving them all on the bottom of the hook, spread 180 degrees. These barbules will represent the legs.
8. Grasp the turkey feather strip and pull it forward over the top of the thorax and legs. Tie it off just behind the eye, to form the wing case.
9. Form a small, neat head and whip finish the fly.



When you open your fly box, listen for the meme. If you don't hear it, tie on a Copper John or some other nymph and...

Enjoy, and see ya on the creek...!!!