



Spring Creek Flycraft and Guide Service

California Guide License No. 2917

Bill Carnazzo
5209 Crestline Drive, Foresthill, CA 95631
630 S. First St., Dunsmuir CA 96025
(530) 367-5209 (Foresthill)
(916) 295-9353 (Cell Phone)
(530) 235-4048 (Dunsmuir)

Fly Tyers Corner July, 2012 Pheasant Tail Soft Hackle (Modified)

by Bill Carnazzo



This month I'm going to give away a little secret about nymph fishing for trout, and soft hackle flies. It's no secret, of course, that my method of nymph fishing is the "short line" or "tight line" technique. The rig sports two flies. The bottom fly (aka "point fly") is normally a large, heavy fly such as Bill's Stick Caddis or a Jimmy Legs; the upper fly, usually a small nymph such as a Dark Lord or PT is on a perpendicular dropper. OK, so what does that have to do with soft hackle flies? Well, here's the rub: I almost always add a third fly to the rig by tying a short (12-14") piece of 5x flourocarbon to the bend of the point fly, and lash a soft hackle fly to the other end. Of course, this complicates the situation because, if this rig is aerialized for any reason (which would be a bad mistake resulting from either striking upward instead of downstream, or from actually trying to back cast the rig), it will inevitably, horribly tangle mercilessly.

The soft hackle adds a new dimension to the short line drift. Normally, the short line drift ends when the line is approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ downstream. With the addition of the soft hackle, the line should be allowed to continue to drift all the way to the immediate downstream position. The reason for this is that beyond the $\frac{3}{4}$ point in the drift, the leader begins to rise in the water column due to the upward pressure of the moving water on the tight leader. This upward movement is where the soft hackle shines, and does its work by resembling an insect (mayfly or caddis) in the process of emerging by swimming upward. The soft partridge hackle moves subtly in the current, imparting life to the fly. The secret, then, is that your drift serves two different purposes, doubling your chance of a hookup. I've been quietly testing out this theory for a long time, and I'm now convinced, based on actual results, that it really works. And there is a bonus: Sometimes a trout will take the soft hackle during the short line part of the drift.

I realize that this all sounds highly technical—and I suppose it is. But if you want to increase your catch rate (assuming you know how to properly use the short line technique), you should give it a try. I have chosen the Pheasant Tail Soft Hackle fly pattern because it is on my "ten deadliest flies" list. If you want to read up on soft hackle flies, there are two good, relatively recent books on the subject: one written by Dave Hughes, and the other by Allen McGee. They are available at most fly shops, or through Amazon.com.

Materials

Hook: Tiemco 101, sizes 18-12
Thread: 70 denier flat nylon, olive
Beads: None
Tail: None
Abdomen: Pheasant tail
Ribbing: Copper wire

Legs: None
Wing: None
Thorax: Fine, small peacock herl
Hackle: Partridge
Weight: None
Head: Thread

Tying Instructions

1. Crimp the hook barb. Cover the hook shank with a single, flat layer of thread; stop immediately above the hook point and leave the bobbin there.
2. Cut a short piece of fine copper wire and tie it in at that point, along with 3 natural pheasant tail fibers. Tie the pheasant tail in by its tips and trim the excess. Move the thread forward to a point about 2 eye widths behind the eye.
3. Wrap the pheasant tail fibers forward along the shank and stop where you left the thread. Tie off the pheasant tail and leave the thread at the same spot.
4. Tie in two pieces of fine peacock herl at the same spot, by their tips. Trim the excess, and move the thread forward slightly. Take 2 or 3 wraps of the peacock herl—one backward over the pheasant tail, and one or two directly in front of it—but don't crowd the eye. Tie off the herl, trim the excess, and leave the thread there.
5. Tie in a well-marked partridge feather by its tip and trim the excess. Move the thread to the hook eye, and leave it there. The feather should be sized so that when tied in and wound around the shank, the barbules reach to the rear of the hook bend.
6. Sweep the barbules of the partridge feather rearward, and take two full winds around the hook. Tie the feather off, and trim the excess. Whip finish, trim the thread, place a tiny drop of superglue on the end of your bodkin, and cement the thread.



Tying Tips

1. Keep the fly sparse, and avoid a thick body.
2. Use your bodkin to apply superglue rather than squeezing a drop from the bottle directly onto the fly. Your placement will be much better.

Now go crank one of these bugs, go fish it. I live by that simple philosophy.

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