

Partridge & Red Soft Hackle... Tom Regina

Is a soft-hackle wet fly a nymph? In some circles, in particular within the old school of traditional fly anglers, it is not a nymph. But for them anything other than a dry fly is not a fly but an abomination of fly angling sport. Others may place soft-hackle wets in a class by themselves; not a nymph, not a dry, not a streamer, etc., but a soft-hackle wet. However, because we often fish soft-hackle wets by “nymphing” and following our definition of a nymph given in the January 2007 issue of “Flies and Lies” we will answer yes - a soft-hackle wet is a nymph, or a soft-hackle nymph. So put your soft-hackle wets in your nymph fly box.

The most important part of a soft-hackle wet fly dressing is the hackle. The body or abdomen, and the thorax are secondary. The abdomen is wound of two layers of working thread over which is wound a layer of floss of the same color as the thread. The body serves as an undercolor to the hackle that undulates in the water, opening and closing over the body as the currents work the hackle. The purpose of the thorax is not to attract trout but to prop up the hackle at about a 90-degree angle to the hook shank.

The hackle should be sparse - about one and a half and not more than two turns around the hook. To get the hackle sparse enough it may be best to strip away feather barbs from one side of the feather stem or quill. The most common feathers used for soft-hackle wet flies are Hungarian partridge. These feathers have a unique glistening quality that adds life like appearance to the fly. Packages of loose Hungarian partridge feathers and whole skins are readily available at most fly shops and from catalogue orders. Other soft-hackles can be obtained from grouse, woodcock, and starling. Hen chicken necks and saddles are another good source of soft-hackle. However cock chicken feathers are too inflexible or stiff for effective wet fly soft-hackle.

For further information on soft-hackle wet flies I recommend the book “*Wet Flies - Tying and Fishing Soft-Hackles, Winged and Wingless Wets, and Fuzzy Nymphs*” by Dave Hughes. ISBN 0-8117-1868-9.

Materials

Hook	Mustad 3906B, size 12
Thread	6/0 red
Body	Red floss over working thread
Thorax	Hare's Ear Plus #7 Tan dubbing and dubbing wax
Hackle	Hungarian partridge



Tying Instructions



1. Debarb the hook and secure it in the vise. Using a jam knot start the thread just behind and abutting the hook eye. To lock in the thread to the hook shank, wind it back about three-sixteenth inch than forward to the hook eye.



2. Select a partridge feather with barb lengths equal to the hook length. Strip away the fuzz at the bottom of the feather stem leaving only well marked barbs. Hold the feather tip between your right-hand thumb and index finger (*You Southpaws figure it out.*) with the concave side toward you and strip away the barbs on the top half of the stem. Flatten the bare stem by running your thumbnail down the feather stem from the base of the barbs back one quarter inch. Flattening the bare stem helps keep the stem from braking when wrapped around the hook. Tie the stem to the top of the hook one sixteenth-inch behind the hook eye with the concave side toward you and the tip of the feather extending over the hook eye.



3. Take about 10 to 15 tight touching turns of thread toward the hook bend to bind the hackle stem to the top of the hook shank. Cut away the excess stem butt and continue the tight touching thread wraps to a point directly over the tip of the hook point.



4. At the thread hang point, directly over the tip of the hook point, tie-in about a twelve inch piece of floss to the top of the hook shank with the short floss butt extending over the hook eye. In touching turns wrap the working thread forward to the hackle tie-in point one sixteenth-inch back from the hook eye.

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5. In slightly overlapping turns wrap the floss forward to the thread hang point. Using the working thread tie off the floss and cut away the floss tag ends.



6. Apply a sparse amount of dubbing wax to about one inch of the working thread adjacent to the hook shank. Apply a small amount of dubbing, in an elongated skein to the waxed portion of the thread. Twist only the top and bottom of the dubbing skein to the thread leaving the center of the skein loose. The loose center of the dubbing skein will adhere to the waxed thread when the thorax is wrapped.



7. Make several wraps of the dubbing skein just behind the hackle tie-in point. This thorax dubbing knob should be somewhat loose with lots of dubbing fibers sticking out in all directions. Do not pluck or cut away any stray dubbing fibers unless they are longer than the hackle barbs. The working thread should now be hanging at the front of the thorax but in back of the hackle tie-in point.

8. Make a single turn of hackle just behind the hook eye, leaving a small amount of room between the eye and the hackle tie-in point for a small neat thread head. Make a second turn of hackle just behind and adjacent to the first. The hackle barbs should stand out away from the hook shank at about a 90-degree angle with a slight bow toward the rear. While holding the hackle tip, work about three turns of working thread through the hackle barbs down to the hackle stem to lock it to the hook shank. These locking thread wraps should be taken in back of, not in front of, the hackle wraps. Cut away the excess hackle tip near this tie-down point. Take three or four turns of thread through the hackle forward to the hook eye. Weave or wobble the thread back and forth through the hackle as you make these turns so as not to matt down any of the hackle barbs. Form a small neat thread head. Half-hitch or whip finish the thread head. Cut away the thread and apply a small amount of head cement without getting cement on the hackle fibers.



Pensacola Junior College Fly Fishing Class 2007

Classes will be held on Wednesday evenings from 6-8 PM at the PJC Pensacola campus, building 17, room 1740 beginning March 7, 2007 and ending May 2, 2007 with the exception of March 21 - Spring Break.

We will teach the basics of fly fishing, including equipment selection, fly tying, fly casting, knots, leader construction, and practical application of fly fishing techniques.

The lead instructors will be Travis Akins, Jerry Aldridge, John Brand, Karen Brand, Bruce Vail, and Captains Baz Yelverton and Bob Quarles. However other club members are needed to serve as proctors for casting, knot tying, and fly tying instruction. If you will be helping John Brand with the casting instruction please contact John at 626-0642 or 516-1833 or

jbrand@santarosamri.com to obtain a copy of John's Casting Instruction Outline. John has put together this instruction outline to be followed by all casting instructors so our casting instruction is standardized and we are all teaching the same thing. Bill Parrish has volunteered to transport the fly rods/reels and Klaus Gohrbandt has volunteered to transport the fly tying equipment to and from each class session.