

Streamer Ties with Tom Regina... Stroat Tail (Tube Flies 101)

Tube flies are a British innovation that have been around for many years. For several decades, United States fly fishers have been using tube flies primarily to fish for salmon and steelhead. U.S. anglers are also now using tube flies to catch all kinds of game fish in both fresh and saltwater. A tube fly is just that: a fly tied on a hollow tube instead of a traditional hook. The tubes are made from copper, aluminum, or hard plastic. This gives the fly dresser a great deal of versatility in fly size and weight. Metal tubes are lined with plastic to prevent chaffing of the leader which is passed through the center of the tube after which the hook is tied onto the leader. The hook either dangles behind the fly or is snugged up to the rear of the hard tube and held in place by a section of soft plastic tube called a junction tube. The junction tube holds the hook in place at the back of the fly. When a fish is hooked the fly can separate from the hook and slide up the leader thus avoiding the abuse a normal fly takes in the mouth of a fish. The fly lasts longer and as an added bonus the hook is easier to remove from the fish, ergo increasing the catch-and-release survival rate.

All the fly tying materials, techniques, and tools you use to tie conventional flies are adaptable to tube flies. There are many vises on the market designed specifically for dressing tube flies. However, tube fly tying doesn't require you invest in one. A little ingenuity and research will lead you to a wealth of resources that will allow you to adapt your conventional vise for tying tube flies. HMH, 14 Maine Street, Box 18, Brunswick, ME 04011 (1-800-335-9057) or www.hmhvises.com, offers a tube-vise adapter for regular vises. The adapter clamps in the jaws of virtually any standard vise and uses stainless steel pins to hold the tube in place. Renzetti, 8800 Grissom Parkway, Titusville, FL 32780 (321-267-7705) or www.renzetti.com, offers a Tube Fly Vise Head which fits all Renzetti Traveler vise stems.

One of the simplest and most economical ways to adapt your conventional vise to tie tube flies is to cut off the eye of a large hook and file the end to a blunt point. Clamp the altered hook in your vise as usual and slide the tube snugly over the hook shank. Wrapping tying thread on the hook shank helps keep the tube from rotating. For our purpose we will use a Mustad Signature S 74S SS, 2XH/4XL, size 3/0 hook to hold the tube as we tie the quick and easy Stroat Tail tube fly.

For more in-depth information on tying tube flies go to the afore mentioned web sites. A good reference for the would-be tube fly tier is the book "*Tube Flies a Tying, Fishing & Historical Guide*" by Mark Mandell & Les Johnson, ISBN 1-57188-036-4, published by Frank Amato Publications, Inc.

Materials

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|---------------|---|
| Tubing | 1 1/2" piece of 1/8" O.D. hard plastic tube and 1/2" piece of 1/8" I.D. soft plastic junction tube. |
| Thread | Gudebrod 3/0 black BCS 118. |
| Glue | Zap-A-Gap |
| Rib | Fine oval silver tinsel. |
| Body | Black punch embroidery yarn. |
| Wing | Black bucktail. |
| Head | Tying thread and head cement and/or epoxy. |



Tying Instructions

1. From a length of hard plastic tubing cut off a piece 1 1/2" long. Using a lighter or match carefully heat and soften one end of the tube. Press the softened end to a flat surface to form a flare or "dam". This dam will prevent tying materials from slipping off the front of the fly. (The junction tube will do the same at the back of the fly).



2. Clamp the altered hook in your vise and slide the tube over the hook shank with the dam toward the hook bend. Slide a 1/2" length of soft junction tube 1/8" onto the non-dam end of the hard tube. Secure the junction tube to the hard tube with several tight overlapping thread wraps. Half hitch or whip finish the thread wraps and cut away the thread. Apply a small amount of glue to the thread wraps.



3. Remove the assembled tube from the hook shank and reposition it back onto the hook shank with the junction tube toward the hook bend. Immediately in back of the dam attach the tying thread and in touching thread wraps cover the tube back to the junction tube. Applying a thin coat of Zap-A-Gap to the thread wraps will prevent them from rotating around the tube. Immediately in front of the junction tube tie in an 8" length of oval tinsel for the rib. Also just in front and adjacent to the junction tube tie in a 30" piece of black punch embroidery yarn for the body. Return the thread to the front of the fly.



4. In touching turns wrap the punch yarn forward to build the body, stopping about 3/16" back from the dam. Tie off the yarn with the tying thread. Trim away the excess yarn. In 7 to 9 evenly spaced turns, spiral wrap the rib tinsel forward to just in front of the body yarn. Tie off the tinsel and cut away the excess.



5. Cut, clean, and stack a small bunch of black bucktail. Tie the bucktail in on top of the tube in the space between the front of the body yarn and the dam. The tips of the wing should extend beyond the junction tube 1/4" to 1/2". Rotate the tube in the vise 180 degrees so the first wing becomes the belly of the fly. Tie in a matching amount of black bucktail on top of the tube in the same manner as the first wing. Make the second wing the same length as the first. Both sides of the body should be visible. Trim the excess bucktail butts at a shallow angle and bind them down with several tight thread wraps. Apply Zap-A-Gap to the thread wraps. Form a neat tapered thread head. Whip finish or half hitch the head thread wraps and apply head cement and/or epoxy.

Smoke and Black Clouser...Variation of Bob Clouser's Original...Jerry Aldridge

Materials

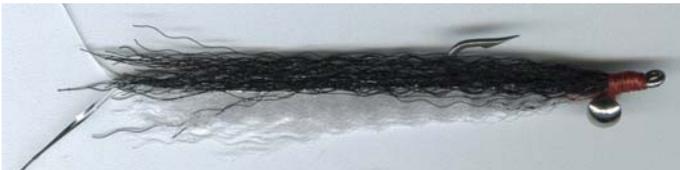
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|---------------|---|
| Hook | Mustad 34007 #2 or equivalent, size to fit prey |
| Thread | Red 3/0 or 6/0 |
| Eyes | Nickel hourglass, 3/16" |
| Wing | Smoke super hair (SH), silver flashabou, black SH |



Tying Instruction



1. Bend barb down, place hook in vise, lay thread over front third of shank. Position thread and eyes 1/4" behind hook eye. Take 10 wraps around hook and shank in same direction, then 15 turns in the other direction, then 5 more in the original direction. Take 10 horizontal turns between the bottom of the eyes and hook shank Position thread in front of eyes.



2. Turn hook upside down in vise. Cut a 2 1/2" length of smoke SH the diameter of a wooden match and place atop hook just behind eye. Take 4 slightly loose thread wraps, correct the position of SH if necessary, then firmly wrap SH in place with several adjacent wraps. Cut 3-4 strands of flashabou the full length of the swath, double them up and tie the 6-8 strands behind

hook eye atop smoke SH. Leave them long for now. Cut a 2 1/2 length of black SH slightly smaller in diameter than the white. Tie in atop flashabou. Trim ends of flashabou 1/2-1" longer than SH. Wrap neat head. Cover thread wraps with a couple of coats of head cement **OR** epoxy for a more attractive and durable fly. If epoxied, turn by hand or in fly turner until epoxy sets.

NOTES....The smoke and black clouser is a fine fly any time of year but seems especially effective in fall and winter. Speckled trout love it but just about any fish that swims by will eat it, for example a 50 pound black drum a couple years back. These days, any time I tie a clouser with artificial hair I place the entire wing on the point side of the hook. I think the resultant profile looks more like a minnow. With bucktail or yak, I still tie the light color on top and the dark on bottom of the hook shank because the fly is prettier that way. The fish probably ignore this logic. For a fuller-bodied look, try light gray and black yak hair - it also works well. The smoke and black is one of my favorites along with tan/olive, green/white, chartreuse/white and orange/brown. Don't leave home without it!