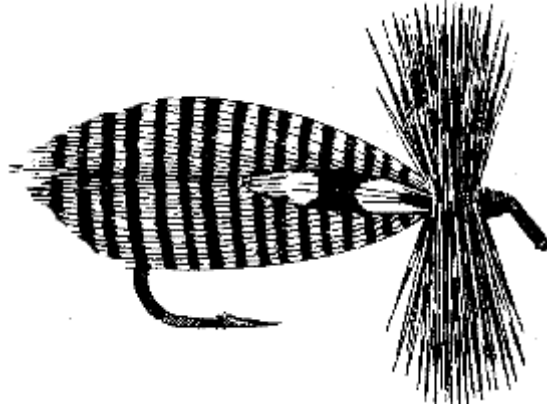


Federation of Fly Fishers Fly of the Month

July, 2000- Hornberg Special Streamer



The Hornberg Special Streamer: Another great fly that is not a fly

By Jim Abbs

Colonel Joseph Bates appears to have approached fly fishing using skills developed as part of his successful military career--he sought the most effective weapon. In his now classic book on streamers Bates noted that if you want to catch big trout (or bass), use streamers and bucktails. It is just a matter of energy. That is, streamers generally represent small fish and it stands to reason that even a fish as little as 2 inches has more calories (energy) than a really big insect. Bill Willers, author of Trout Biology, supports Bates' observations and notes that as trout grow beyond six inches, noninsect prey items like crayfish and bait fish make up an even larger proportion of their diet. For example, data from New York streams show that while bait fish make up only 4% of a 6-inch trout's diet, a 10-inch trout eats bait fish a whopping 43% of the time. While the availability of bait fish in any given lake or river will influence these numbers, if you are looking for lunker trout, streamers should be in your fly box.

Because bait fish are not insects or "flies", it is amazing how long fly fishers have been using these non-fly patterns. Apparently as early as 1800 the British were using feathered imitations that looked like little fish to catch sea trout, pike and saltwater species. The first "streamers" in the U.S. were apparently designed to catch smallmouth bass. Our modern streamers, with their elongated shape appear to have been first developed in the northeastern U.S., probably Maine. Carrie Steven's in the 1920's developed the Gray Ghost Streamer, which on its first use yielded a 6 pound, 13 ounce brook trout. The Gray Ghost had several unique features, the most striking of which are its multi-layered feather wings and throat.

Frank Hornberg, a game warden from central Wisconsin created a fly that was different from then traditional streamers in a number of respects - including a full hackle collar and feathered wings with a pointed tip. The Hornberg Special Streamer is not only for imitating fish, but also is used as a dry fly imitation of caddis and stonefly. Some experts suggest fishing the Hornberg dry until it sinks and only then fish it as a streamer. Hornberg was aided by the Weber Company of Steven's Point, Wisconsin to develop this multi-purpose fly.

At that time(in the 40's) , Weber Company was the biggest commercial fly tying company in the world. Although the Hornberg Special Streamer originated in the midwest, its biggest fans are in the northeast where Hornbergs are fished both wet and dry in a variety of colors. Tied in small sizes it's very appealing to most panfish, and in large sizes it is deadly on bass.

Today, in Northern New England, where Hornbergs are among the best-selling dry flies, they are tied in many colors including brown, yellow and green, sometimes with a dubbed fur body. Interestingly, Jimmy Nix, who designed the Shineabou Shad for saltwater use indicates that he was inspired by the Hornberg Special as well. This is obviously a bait fish imitation worth considering for many kinds of predator fish.

MATERIALS

Hook: Mustad 9672 or equivalent 2X or 3X long hook (sizes 4-10)

Thread: Black 6/0

Tail: None

Body: Silver tinsel (flat)

Wing (inner): Yellow saddle hackle (original), or yellow bucktail or yellow calf tail,

Wing (outer): Barred gray mallard flank feathers

Cheeks: Jungle cock or equivalent

Hackle: Grizzly (original), or grizzly and brown

Head: Black

TYING STEPS:

1. Tie in flat silver tinsel, wrap thread back to 80% the length of the hook shank,
2. Wrap the flat tinsel to the end of the thread and tie off.
3. Select two relatively narrow yellow saddle hackles (or yellow bucktail .. or yellow calf tail) that are 1.5 times the length of the hook shank
4. Tie in the yellow saddle hackles on both sides of the hook shank, with a length extending beyond the bend of the hook by about 1/3 the hook shank length.
5. Select two well matched barred mallard flank feathers and tie these in on the sides of the yellow saddle hackles.
6. Take a little lacquer or head cement between the thumb and forefinger and stroke the yellow saddle hackles and mallard flank feathers to a point at the rear of the fly.
7. Tie in the jungle cock substitute on the sides of the mallard flank feathers with two spots showing. A recommended substitute for jungle cock (endangered and illegal to import) are the barred yellow flank feathers of the wood duck. To get the waxy finish of the jungle cock eye, it is suggested that the yellow wood duck feathers be laquered before use.
8. Select 2-3 grizzly hackles with appropriate barbule length for the hook size (1.5 times hook gap) and tie them in front of the wing. Wrap these hackles front toward the eye of the hook, creating a fairly wide and heavy collar. Tie off, whip finish and go catch a big northeastern brook trout (or smallmouth bass).

Please Credit FFF Website or FFF Clubwire with any use of the pattern.
You can direct any questions or comments to FOM at flyofthemoth@fedflyfishers.org