

## FFF Fly of the Month

### BLUE RAT



By Bob Bates

Check your calendars!!!!!! For a lot of folks on the western part of North America it is time to start thinking about that anadromous rainbow trout called a steelhead. The next two or three months will see an increase in the number of fish heading upstream to spawn. There are other times to fish for steelhead, but for many people September, October and November are the peak times to chase them. A variety of flies can be used to hook a sea-going rainbow trout. They range from simple trout flies, some people say that by using them you are insulting the prestigious steelhead, to flies from the Atlantic Salmon world that are too beautiful to use.

The Blue Rat pictured above, tied by my older son Hilary Bates, is definitely on the beautiful side but not "too beautiful" to use. At times it has caught fish when nothing else would attract them. A downstream cast quartering with a floating line is the usual technique. Most of the time for me there was no question about the hit. Some fish almost jerked me off of my rock.

The Blue Rat is a member of the Rat series of Atlantic-Salmon flies. According to Dick Stewart and Farrow Allen in *Flies for Atlantic Salmon*, the Rat series was introduced in 1911 by Roy Angus Thompson whose initials R.A.T. gives the series its odd name. Many people contributed to the Rat series, and in particular the Blue Rat was designed by Poul Jorgensen for fishing in Iceland. There it is said that "any fly will take

salmon as long as it is blue." This fly is definitely blue.

Although it was tied for Icelandic salmon, the Blue Rat works for steelhead thousands of miles away.

### Materials

**Hook:** Partridge CS10 or other salmon hook, 3/0-2

**Thread:** Red

**Tag:** Gold oval tinsel

**Tail:** Peacock sword feathers

**Rib:** Gold oval tinsel

**Body:** Rear blue floss, veiled on top with blue floss

**Front** peacock herl

**Wing:** Gray fox guard hairs

**Collar:** Soft grizzly hackle

**Cheeks:** Jungle cock

**Head:** Red thread

### Tying Steps

1. Debarb hook before you start tying. Wild steelhead must be released unharmed.
2. Attach thread and tinsel about mid-shank. Wind tinsel to rear and stop before reaching point of hook, wrap tinsel forward making sure there are no gaps, secure at tie in point, but don't trim. Secure the tinsel on far side of hook so it will be out of your way for attaching tail and body materials.
3. Collect several peacock sword fibers and attach them at front of tag to make about a gap length tail.
4. Attach blue floss at front of tag, and wind thread forward smoothly over sword fibers and floss. Stop thread at about the one third to one quarter point, and trim excess sword fibers and floss. Wrap floss forward smoothly to tying thread, secure on top of hook but don't trim excess. Spiral tinsel forward in two or three turns, secure and trim excess.
5. It's hard to see in the picture, but there is a thin veil of blue floss over the body. Lay excess floss back over body and use a thread wrap or two to hold it there. Trim floss at about mid-tail and comb it out so it looks like a veil and not a rope. (This combing isn't necessary, but it looks nicer.)

**6.** Secure several peacock herls in front of floss body, twist herls and thread together, wrap forward to about one eye width from eye, secure and trim excess herl.

**7.** Cut a bunch of gray fox hair off hide and clean out under fur leaving only the guard hairs. Tie on wing so it extends to about the middle of the tail. Trim butts on an angle, and wind thread over them. (If you don't have fox you might be able to use squirrel tail without getting into too much trouble with the "keepers of purity." Also, the steelhead won't mind.)

**8.** Select a soft grizzly saddle hackle with fibers about 1-1/2 to 2 gap widths long and attach it in front of wing. Stroke fibers back as you wrap hackle two or three times around hook, secure and trim excess. Wind thread back over fibers a little to hold them backward.

**9.** Place a jungle cock feather on each side of wing. They should be toward the front of the wing. If you don't have jungle cock just skip the cheeks. Also the original pattern called for a veiling of blue king fisher over the cheeks, so if you don't have it consider it optional.

**10.** Whip finish with a nice head and coat with head cement.

A picture of a Blue Rat tied by Poul Jorgensen is on page 66 of *Flies for Atlantic Salmon*. It shows the blue veil over the body and the blue king fisher on the cheeks. Steelhead and salmon are attracted to pretty flies. So after tying a few Blue Rats, go out and feed them to some big fish.

Please Credit FFF Website or FFF Clubwire with any use of the pattern.  
You can direct any questions or comments to [flyofthefmonth@fedflyfishers.org](mailto:flyofthefmonth@fedflyfishers.org)