

## **FFF Fly of the Month**

### **BLUE HILTON**



**By Bob Bates**

Its ancestor, Silver Hilton, is a fly that originated about 1950 on the Klamath and Trinity rivers in northern California. It is still popular on those and other steelhead rivers. Part of its effectiveness is attributed to the hackle tip wings that move in an enticing fashion when touched by varying river currents. In 1993 G.L. Britton, Spokane, WA decided that it would be even more effective with good steelhead colors. He dyed suitable materials Blue, Purple, Red and Green. With them, he tied a line of flies: Blue Hilton, Purple Hilton, Red Hilton and Green Hilton.

He considers these summer and fall steelhead flies that are best in decently clear water. Right now should be the ideal time to try these flies on the Grand Ronde, Snake, Clearwater and other steelhead rivers.

G.L.'s fishing instructions are typical of what we hear from steelhead experts. Floating line, quartering downstream cast, swing and pause at the end of the swing. Sometimes you need the longest cast you can manage, and other times a 30- to 40-foot cast is more than enough. "Control" is a key word.

Keep the line under control so a belly doesn't develop that will make the fly move so fast that a steelhead could never catch up. A reach cast might be needed to start and then a mend to keep the fly line straight from fly to rod

tip. However, be careful with the mend so the fly isn't jerked a foot or two out of the intended path. A funny movement of the fly will tell the fish to look at something else. At the end of the swing let the fly hang for a while before twitching it back for another cast. More than once the swing was finished and I turned to ask my partner "Where are the fish?" when the steelhead hit.

Sometimes there is no question about a strike, but other times you will only feel a tap. If you feel the weight of the fish then set the hook. The strikes that I like most are the ones that nearly jerk me off my rock. Whenever you hook a steelhead, you are in for a ride you will not soon forget.

### **Materials:**

**Hook:** Alec Jackson, Spey, No. 3, Silver

**Thread:** Black 3/0

**Tail:** Blue dyed grizzly marabou

**Body:** Black chenille, fine

**Rib:** Small oval silver tinsel

**Wing:** Blue dyed grizzly hen saddle

**Hackle:** Blue dyed grizzly hen saddle

### **Tying Steps:**

1. Smash the barb with smooth jaw pliers. On many rivers wild steelhead must be released.
2. Attach your thread about mid-shank and wind it rearward a little. Use the picture as a guide, and tie on the tail forward of the hook's point. The tail is about a gap width long and should not extend past the end of the hook.
3. Secure a piece of fine oval tinsel where the tail is tied in.
4. Strip a little chenille fuzz to expose the thread core, and tie it on by this thread core. Wind thread forward to a point about two eye widths back from the eye.
5. Wind the chenille forward and secure. Spiral the rib forward and tie it at the same point. Trim excess materials.
6. Select two feathers of equal size, measure them to give a wing that extends to about mid-tail and strip off excess fibers. Place concave faces together and hold them above and along the hook when you attach them securely. The first thread turn should be quick and solid.

Following turns should be in front of the first to avoid twisting the wings.

7. Attach hackle feather in front of the wings, take several tight turns, secure and trim excess.
8. Whip finish a tight head, and coat it with a vinyl head cement.

Variations: Red, Green and Purple dyed feathers tied on a gold Alec Jackson spey hook and gold oval tinsel.

I just finished reading a great article "How a Steelhead Takes Your Fly" by Dec Hogan, *Fish and Fly*, August 2003, p. 18. Now all you have to do is tie a few Blue Hiltons, etc., and go do it. I hope to see you on the stream. (Although when I think about it, I hope you don't catch my steelhead. If you do please release them for me.)

Please Credit FFF Website or FFF Clubwire with any use of the pattern.  
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