

MAX CANYON



By Bob Bates

Comments:

This is one of the many popular steelhead patterns. According to Dick Stewart and Farrow Allen in *Flies for Steelhead* it was developed about 1972 by Doug Stewart from Gresham, Oregon at Mack's Canyon on the Deschutes River. The name was misspelled to keep attention away from the already too popular Mack's Canyon area. Oregon folks and others popularized it. Also, the Oregon Council of the Federation of Fly Fishers used it as the logo for the 2010 Fly Tying Expo in Albany, OR. This version of the Max Canyon was tied by Dick Nicklas of Leavenworth, WA at the 2011 Washington Fly Fishing Fair in Ellensburg, WA.

For years anglers thought that you had to get on the stream bottom to catch steelhead. This would often result in hooking rocks and losing the fly and sometimes the whole fast sinking fly line. Later we learned that a quartering downstream cast with a full sink or even floating line would do the job. The time of the year and weather conditions influence the techniques. In the fall, quartering downstream is good. If there is ice freezing in the guides, going deep is still a reasonable idea. Staying home by the fire is also a good idea.

August is a good time to be moving toward steelhead season. Make friends with some successful steelhead anglers, and learn from them. Tie a few flies. Some local fly shop employees can also help. Then you are ready to go fishing in September, October, November, etc.

Materials List:

Hook: Salmon fly hook, loop eye, size 2 to 10.

Thread: Black 6/0

Tail: Calf tail, white over orange

Rib: Oval Tinsel, silver

Body Rear 1/3rd: Ultra chenille (1 mm), orange or yellow

Body Forward 2/3rds: Chenille, black

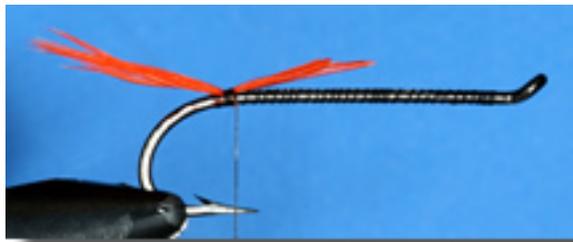
Beard: Schlappen, black

Wing: Calf tail, white over orange

Tying Steps:



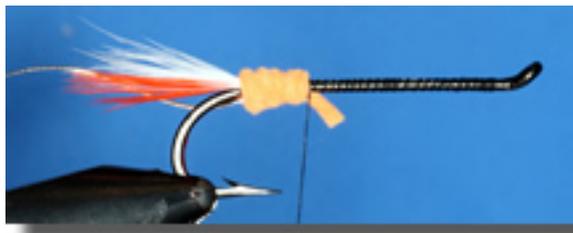
1. Start thread at eye and wind rearward to a position over the barb.



2. Select a few orange calf tail fibers, then stack and tie them on at the bend.



3. Stack and tie on a clump of the white calf tail



4. Tie in oval silver rib. Tie on a piece of ultra chenille and wrap forward 4 - 5 wraps to cover a 4th to a 3rd of the shank.



5. Select a length of black chenille, strip off some of the fuzzy stuff, and then tie it on the hook by the thread core so you don't have a big bump. Wrap chenille forward and tie in leaving a little stub of chenille. Strip off the fuzzy stuff, and secure chenille by thread core so you don't have a lump in front.



6. Wrap tinsel forward in 5 turns. This is evidence of his indoctrination by the salmon fly tying guys. He commented that the fish probably don't count.



7. Cut two pieces of Schlappen, even tips, put one over the other and slip V into the thread. Tie on long, and then pull to proper length. Adjust length so tips are close to point of hook.



8. Beard in place.



9. Put orange calf tail wing on. Want straight calf tail fibers so they can be stacked. Measure so tips extend to about bend of hook, switch hands, cut and secure. Most experienced tiers will cut or trim the measured material, and then tie it in. This is much more efficient than trimming tied down stubble.



10. Cut a bunch of white calf tail about twice the size of the orange, stack it and tie it on so tips extend to about the bend of hook or maybe a little longer. Build a head, whip finish, and put on a drop of head cement if you want.

Closing comments:

I consider this a “variation” because as with any great pattern there are different ways of tying it. Apparently, the original pattern was tied with wool yarn. One pattern book called for a thread body. The length of the rear portion ranges from barely 1/5th to 1/2 shank length. Several books call for a black hackle collar rather than a black beard. So you see there are few absolutes in fly tying. If it catches fish it is great fly.

This is the favorite steelhead pattern for a friend who uses it in eastern Washington and northern Idaho. In the Grande Ronde River, WA he uses a size 10 hook and in the Clearwater River, ID he steps up to a size 6. In the fall with warmer water he uses a floating line and a long leader, 12 feet or more. If you have steelhead in your part of the world you need to get ready by tying a few Max Canyons.

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