

TURKEY NYMPH



Published by Bob Bates
Federation of Fly Fishers - Washington Council

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Opening Comments

Here is an effective pattern that Don McFarland was demonstrating at the 2013 East Idaho Fly Tying Expo. Don is from Boise, Idaho, and he ties at several shows, fairs and expos in the Northwest part of the United States.

Don said that he uses it on the Owyhee (Oregon) and Boise (Idaho) rivers. He even had a picture of a monster fish that his friend caught using a Turkey Nymph that Don had tied.

OK how does he fish it? Most of the time he suspends it from a strike indicator. The length of leader between the strike indicator and the fly depends on how fast the water is moving. In still water or very slow moving water make the length a little less than the water depth. In moving water make it two times the water depth. If it is run-off time you don't have a chance so go home or a nearby lake.

Keep your eye on the strike indicator. If it does anything strange, tighten the line and see if there is wiggle. That is what I did years ago on the Madison river in Montana. I was casting so the fly would sink and drift alongside of a rock. My strike indicator stopped, and my first thought was "hang-up." However, there was a wiggle when I tightened the line. Eventually, a nice foot long rainbow came to hand and was released. If the strike indicator moves sideways you can be pretty sure you have a fish. I say "pretty sure" because nothing is a sure thing when you are fishing.

In lakes or ponds if the strike indicator goes down it might be a fish. If it stays down it is probably a weed. Fish will usually spit out phony food. If you look away to pour coffee or get a sandwich the strike indicator will go down, and when you look back it will be coming up.

I start with the strike indicator about a foot above the bottom in lakes and adjust until I catch fish. Try casting downwind; then cast crosswind.

Materials list

Hook: Daiiiche 1310 short shank, size 18 (The shank has the length of a #20)

Thread: Uni thread, 8/0, Camel

Tail: Wood duck

Rib: Copper wire, fine

Abdomen: Cinnamon turkey tail fibers

Thorax: Peacock herl

Tying steps



Step 1

Attach thread at bend of hook, which is usually over the barb. Trim excess.



Step 2

Select three fibers of a wood duck flank feather, and tie them on giving about a shank length. The shank is measured from the bend at the back of the hook to the bend at the eye.



Step 3

Trim excess wood duck at front of hook. Hold copper wire under shank and wind thread rearward securing it to just in front of where the tail was tied in.



Step 4

Select two fibers from the turkey tail feather, and tie them in by their tips. Trim excess turkey fibers and wind the thread forward to about one eye width back from the eye.



Step 5

The turkey fibers are delicate, so be careful with this step. Hold the fibers gently in the hackle pliers and carefully wrap them around the shank. It helps to let the hackle pliers and fibers hang over your fingers, rather than holding the hackle pliers. Secure the turkey fibers when you reach the thread. Trim excess.



Step 6

Spiral the copper wire rib forward three or four turns. Wrap the wire in the opposite direction than you wrapped the thread and turkey fibers. This counter wrapping strengthens the turkey fibers and gives the appearance of segmentation. Secure the wire.



Step 7

To save wear and tear on your scissors, break off the wire by wiggling it. Tie on some small peacock herl and spin it so the herl is twisted with the tying thread. Trim excess peacock herl. Whip finish the head. Do not use head cement.

Closing Comments

When you start tying this simple pattern you will probably break a few turkey fibers. Don't be discouraged. Even Don breaks one occasionally. When on a roll tying 4 or 5 dozen for his fly box he does better. The big fish he catches are particularly hard on this pattern. He usually replaces a fly after three or four fish.

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

You can direct any questions or comments to FOM at
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