

OSPREY FLY BOX

CALIFORNIA NEIL

contributed by
Rick Jones

In 1968, I met Neil Light while fishing the Dean River. We quickly became friends and have traveled all over to chase fish. While fishing with him in Tofino for Coho, I discovered him using a fly he called "the euphosid". It worked very well for coho in and around that area.

Upon returning to Vancouver I found Don McDermid wearing this fly in his hat. When I asked about the fly, he said some Americans were having great success with it in open water for coho. He informed me it was all over the internet.

Now I knew Neil was still in Tofino and would be there for the next three weeks, so I phoned him about the fly and how the information was all over the internet. He was quite amused and we did not hear much about it until the fly started to show up in magazines, usually with nobody knowing the originator, but that it was known as "The California Neil", designed by a guy from California.

When I talked to Neil just before Christmas this year, I suggested we put the story to bed by letting everybody know about the fly and its history. The following is the story as told by "California Neil".

CALIFORNIA NEIL

by
Neil Light

Late in the 1990's I was fishing for fresh Coho on Washington's Kalama River. They were being their usual temperamental selves. The most one could expect to catch was one or two a day. Some of the locals showed me their favorite fly. I can't remember the pattern's name but it had a variegated yellow and olive body ribbed with palmer tied grizzly hackle. Basically a standard wooly worm! I laughed to myself thinking you have got to be kidding. While it wasn't a total killer, it certainly worked much better than anything I was throwing.

Several seasons later was still using it for staging Coho. Feeling kinda weird using a trout/bass pattern for such a noble fish as Coho Salmon I decided to modify it. Knowing the both Coho and Springs like green coloured lures I tied a green floss body overwrapped with pearl mylar. A simple grizzly fiber tail combined with a palmer tied grizzly hackle completed the fly. When staging coho want green this fly is death!

I tie it in sizes # 4-2X long thru # 10 standard. In the smallest sizes I think a bronze or black nickel hook works better. Depending upon their mood this pattern will work using anything from a ripping fast retrieve to a dead slow crawl.

I was using a large version of this fly for saltwater Coho at Tofino one year when two Canadian tackle shop owners witnessed how effective it was. After asking for a sample they wanted to know if they could tie it commercially. I said fine as long as they gave me some credit for developing the pattern. Since it didn't have a name they creatively called it the "California Neil". Somebody put it on the internet even before I left Tofino that year.

The original pattern wasn't very durable at all. Thrashing coho would rip off the hackle or shred the mylar after only one or two fish. I started epoxying the mylar and hackle during construction. Although it's a little tricky wrapping the palmer tied hackle over the wet mylar, this step makes this fly almost indestructible. I've seen some very creative and humorous variations of the 'Neil'- Laser Neil, Rubber Legged Neil, Diamond Braid Neil, Pink Neil, Black-Eyed Neil, etc.

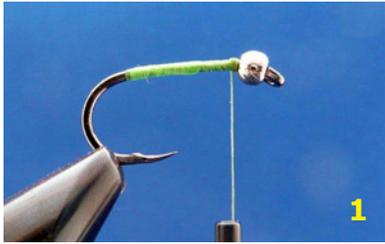
MATERIALS



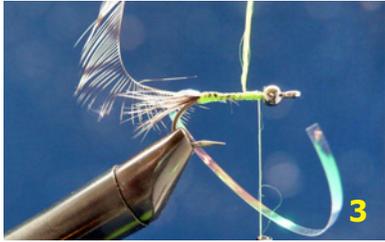
- Hook:** Mustad 34007, 340011 Sizes 4- 2X long thru 10 Tiemco 3769, Targus 8500
- Thread:** Florescent Green Danville flat waxed nylon tread
- Bead:** Optional ~ Gold or Silver Bead
Size to suite hook.
- Tail:** Long grizzly hackle fibers.
Olive Krystal Flash ~ 2 to 4 strands
- Body:** Four strand florescent green Danville floss
1/8 to 3/16 inch wide pearl mylar strips
(Mylar Christmas tree icicle strips work great)
- Hackle:** Grizzly saddle or long neck hackle
- webby wet fly stripped clean one side.
- Coating:** Clear Epoxy ~ 30 minute to 2 hour.
(Do not use 5 minute epoxy as it yellows)

TYING INSTRUCTIONS

Photography by Peter Chatt



- Pinch barb.
- Slip on bead head if you are adding weight to fly.
- Tie on thread.
- Tie on one clump of long grizzly hackle fibres as tail.
- Top with 2 to 4 strands of olive crystal flash.



- Strip off fibres on one side of long grizzly saddle or neck hackle.
- Tie on end of hook butt first, fibres curved forward.
- Tie on one strip of mylar.
- Leave both hackle and mylar strip hanging off rear of hook.



- Tie on 4 strand floss and wrap tapered body.
- Tie off just behind eye or bead and cut thread.
- Set aside enough pre-tied hooks for an epoxy run.



- Mix long cure epoxy.
- Epoxy tapered floss body.



- Over-wrap epoxied body with mylar strip.
- Tie off.



- Spread even thin layer of epoxy on top of mylar.
- Wrap grizzly hackle forward palmer style over wet mylar and tie off.



- Hook onto a foam drying block or rotating drying block to set up.



The Finished Fly

California Neil

*And now you know
THE REST OF THE STORY!*