

OSPREY FLY BOX

FOAM STEELHEAD SKATER

contributed by
Doug Wright

Nothing beats a surface attack from a steelhead while skating a beautiful river. Watching that fly dance and skitter along the river's surface builds high anticipation. As it approaches a bit of structure that we've been eagerly making our way down the run towards, while trying not to stumble and go for a swim, it almost becomes too much. Cast, skate, step. Cast, skate, step. Cast, skate.. a little inside mend.. SMASH.

At my tying class this past Thursday night at Oscar's Fly & Tackle, we tied up some of these foam skaters. It's a bit of a generic pattern that I've tweaked over the years, and remains a good performer with nice profile and is relatively quick to tie. A couple folks mentioned they'd likely forget the materials we used and the procedure of making these flies, so here it is.

Happy tying and good luck on the river.



MATERIALS



- Hook:** Mustad R73AP
- Thread:** UNI 6/0
- Tail:** Moose or Bucktail
- Butt:** Floss
- Body:** Ice dub, or preferred dubbing
- Wings:** Moose or Bucktail
- Wing Case:** 2mm Closed-cell foam
- Thorax:** Crystal Chenille or a Scruffy Dubbing
- Collar:** Guinea Fowl, Saddle Hackle, Pheasant Rump, etc.

TYING INSTRUCTIONS



1. Start thread and wrap shank. Cut a small clump of hair for the tail and use a hair stacker to align the tips. Traditionally we would use moose, but for the past number of years I've been using the top (dark side) hair from bucktails. It ties nicely to the hook shank without adding as much bulk, and the darker hair from the topside of the bucktail has a nice mottled, natural look that works well with buggy flies. Bind the tail material along most of the hook shank to maintain a level, uniform underbody.



TYING INSTRUCTIONS

.... continued



2. Tie-in a length of floss for the butt. In this case, because I'm out of chartreuse floss, I used 20lb backing instead. I've done this a lot in camp. It works well and is more durable than floss, however it does not lay down as flat. Tie in about 3/4 of way down shank - wrap floss back to tail and do a couple wraps under tail to lift tail. Then back to tie in point and clip.



3. Stack another clump of moose or bucktail for the wings, this time using about twice the amount of material that was used for the tail. Proportionally I like the look of the fly if each wing has about the same fullness as the tail. Tie in the wing forward so it is about shank-length.



4. Form a body by tightly twisting a bit of Ice Dub to the thread, and wrapping forward from the butt. Leave just under half of the remainder of the space for the thorax.

5. Cut about a 1/4" (6mm) strip of closed-cell foam and snip a point in one end to aid in tying to the hook. Attach at the back of the thorax area to be used for the wing case.



6. Build a thorax using about three to four wraps of Crystal Chenille. On this size 6 hook I used a medium-sized chenille. Add a collar in front using two to three wraps of saddle hackle or guinea fowl, pheasant rump, etc. depending on the look you're trying to achieve. Park your thread in front of the wing, right behind the hook eye.

7. Split the wing into two equal parts, folding each half out to the side and back. Fold the strip of foam forward and secure in front of the wings using two loose wraps, then pull tight. Make sure you're happy with the positioning of everything, then add another five tight wraps or so. Fold the tag end back, leaving a bit of doubled-over foam protruding forward that pushes water on the swing and adds buoyancy. Tie down with another five tight wraps of thread and trim the excess. Lift the foam head up and whip-finish to the shank right behind the hook eye. Add head cement then pinch the barb so you're ready to go.



8. View from the top.

Tight Lines & Good Luck!