

Leslie's Quill Gordon



By Bob Bates

The name Quill Gordon is famous for several reasons. One is that it refers to Theodore Gordon a turn of the century fisherman and prolific writer. Another reason is the original Quill Gordon imitated the earliest hatching large mayflies (*Epeorus pleuralis*) in many Pennsylvania and New York streams. Dick Stewart and Farrow Allen in *Flies for Trout* have a picture of a Quill Gordon tied by J. Edison Leonard in the fashion that Theodore Gordon probably used. It had a long swept back wood duck wing and a stripped peacock herl body. The final reason: It is great for catching fish.

Leslie Wrixon was building on a lot of history when she tied this fly at the 2007 FFF Show and Conclave in Livingston, MT. The main change she made was to substitute porcupine hair for the stripped peacock herl. Porcupine hair is much stronger than peacock herl and doesn't need the gold wire rib or lacquer coating for support.

Some mayfly species, like *Epeorus pleuralis*, hatch in faster sections of streams where they have difficulty getting off the water. This is an ideal fly for such situations. It floats fairly well and has a good imitative silhouette. A drag free float is needed to present a fly like this one. If you have trouble with the drag free float talk to some good anglers in your fly club or get a lesson from a certified FFF Fly Casting Instructor.

For more information on Theodore Gordon and the Quill Gordon check the FFF website Fly of the Month for January, 2001.

Materials List:

Hook: Any dry fly hook, sizes 14-18

Thread: UNI-Thread 8/0 Black

Tail: Mixed grizzly and brown

Body: Porcupine hair

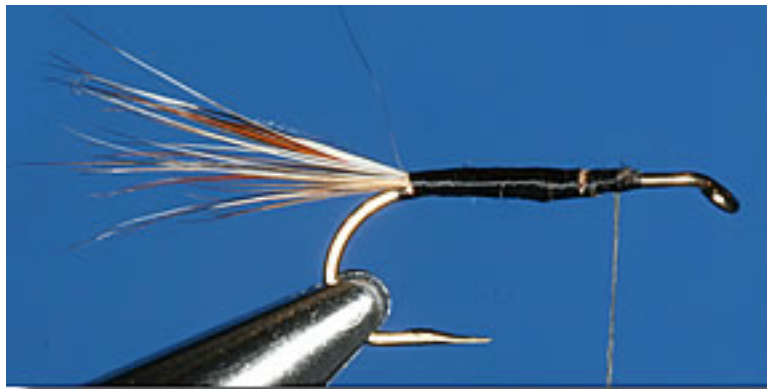
Wing: Wood duck

Hackle: Dark Badger

Tying steps:



1. Start thread at front and wind smoothly to rear. You can use any thread you like, but Leslie prefers 8/0 UNI-Thread



2. Use hackle that has no webbing to it so the barbs give a shiny appearance. Pull the barbs off the stem, and lay them down so you can pick them up easily. Leslie put them on a little dish. Then repeat with another hackle, and lay the barbs on top of the first bunch. Pick them up so they mix; snip off the bits of shaft that came with the barbs. Make the tail about shank length. Don't be a slave to the exact formula, the idea is to tie something that is pleasing to the tier, angler and fish. Make one wrap under the tail and one above to raise tail up a bit and spread it.



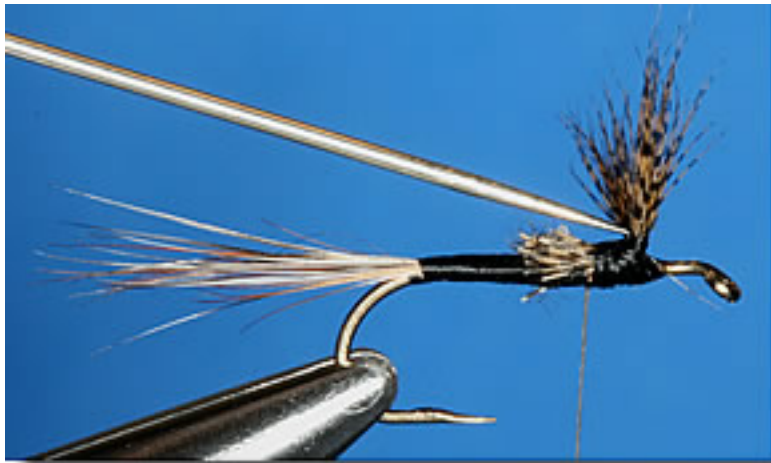
3. Now for the wings. Barred wood duck is preferred, but mallard flank feather will do also. In gathering up a bunch of fibers, make sure there is enough to look good after they are divided. (Can use an entire feather.) Tie it in about the same length as the tail. Put a thread dam in front to hold up the wing a little. Trim butts on a slope to help shape the underbody.



4. Divide the fibers, and do a figure 8 with the thread to hold them apart.



5. Then post each wing. Two or three thread wraps will do.



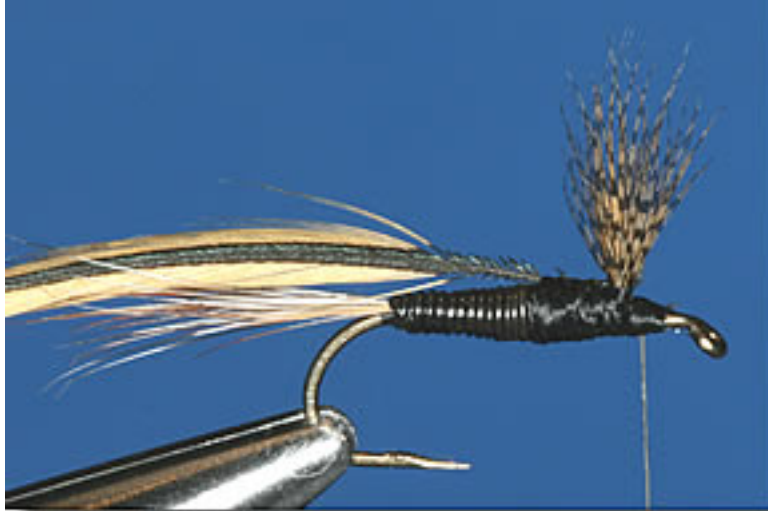
6. Leslie's secret head cement for traveling is CA Glue or generic "Crazy Glue" she gets four for a dollar at Wall Mart. Put it in a puddle on a piece of foil for example, and it will last about 45 minutes. Put a little drop behind the wing with a dipping tool or bodkin. Wrap thread to rear to make a smooth tapered underbody.



7. Porcupine hair is very durable, shiny, flexible and will not break when wrapped. Tie it in by the small end. The hair comes in different diameters on the animal. Select hair in proportion to hook size. Also some hair will wrap flat rather with nice quill segments. Usually this is lighter color hair at the larger end. Tie hair on top of hook in front of tail.



8. Wrap the hair forward in adjoining turns. Take a little extra effort to wrap the hair in a tidy fashion. Leave a quarter of the hook shank empty. Snip off the excess and bind down the stub. Save the cut off piece for other flies.



9. Select a hackle with barbs about 1-1/2 gap widths long. Trim some of the larger fibers off the stem for a little more holding power. Tie it down, shiny side up, behind the wing leaving space for the hackle. Move the thread forward and bind down the rest of the stem in front of the wing. Tie it in so when you start wrapping the barbs will be perpendicular to the shank and shiny side forward. Trim off any excess that points forward over the eye. (Traditional Quill Gordon recipes say brown and grizzly or medium dun.)



10. Wrap the hackle four times behind the wing and three times in front. Not a hard and fast rule; it depends on what looks good. Mainly it is what looks good and will float. Move the tread out of the way and snip off the excess hackle. Then put on a whip finish and a little head cement.

Closing comments: This is an easy fly to tie, catches fish like mad and is very durable. The only problem is getting the porcupine hair. Fly shops generally don't carry it. You need to search the internet for it, or talk to some of your Native American friends. Porcupine hair is used for Roaches, a Native American headdress, so some of the items that show up on an internet search will be completed Roaches up to \$450. Just keep looking. If you know eBay there is some available there. I found three companies that had porcupine hair by the ounce: Centralia Fur & Hide; Claw, Antler & Hide Company and Moscow Hide and Fur. You might want to go together with a few friends, an ounce of porcupine hair will last a life time or three. There is always road kill. I saw a good looking one the other day as I was driving to a meeting at 70 mph, but I didn't stop. Leslie offered to share some of her porcupine hair with FFF tiers. Send her an e-mail request with your address and Council affiliation to: [E-mail link
lesliewrixon@yahoo.com](mailto:lesliewrixon@yahoo.com)

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