

## PURPLE RAT



By Bob Bates

October is when many folks in Western Canada, Northwest United States and down along the California coast go steelhead fishing. Most of them use nice looking flies to attract the attention of these fish returning to their home waters. Some even use expensive Atlantic Salmon patterns. Tom Le Bar from Sweet Home, OR was tying attractive steelhead flies at the April, 2010 Fly Tying Expo in Albany, Oregon.

First let me assure you that this is not the only “Rat” pattern in existence. There are eight more listed in *Flies for Atlantic Salmon* by Dick Stewart and Farrow Allen. According to them the “Rat” series was originated and introduced in 1911 by Roy Angus Thompson (R.A.T.). Many well known angler/tiers, including Paul Jorgenson, are named as developers of “Rat” patterns. A variation of Jorgenson’s Blue Rat is shown in the September 2002 FFF Fly of the Month.

Most anglers fish this pattern wet fly style. That is cast a floating line quartering downstream, and let the fly swing toward shore. Steelhead hits are obvious most of the time. I have had some hits almost jerk me off my rock. Tom usually fishes this fly deep. However, if you leave room between the eye and the head a riffle hitch can be used. Then you can fish it as a waking fly and watch the fish chase the fly if you keep it waking. What you are supposed to do is bow to the fish and then tighten the line when you feel its weight.

Tying a riffle a riffle hitch is easy. (It goes by other names, also.) Tie the fly on your leader using your favorite knot. It can be an improved Clinch Knot or an improved Turle Knot. Then face downstream, hold the fly pointing toward the shore put one half hitch behind the eye with the leader coming toward you. Put a second half hitch behind the first. Again, the leader comes out toward you. You can use line mends to slow or speed up the fly.

## Materials List:

**Hook:** Daiichi 2421 Low Water

**Thread:** Orange, black or any color you like

**Tag:** Mylar tinsel, medium, gold/silver and fuchsia Uni-Stretch

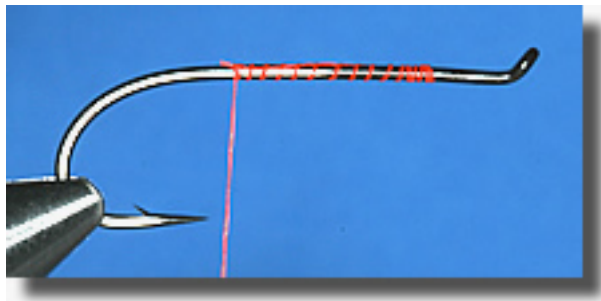
**Tail:** Fox squirrel, reddish/brownish hair from the bottom of the tail

**Rib and counter wrap:** Small oval tinsel, silver or gold

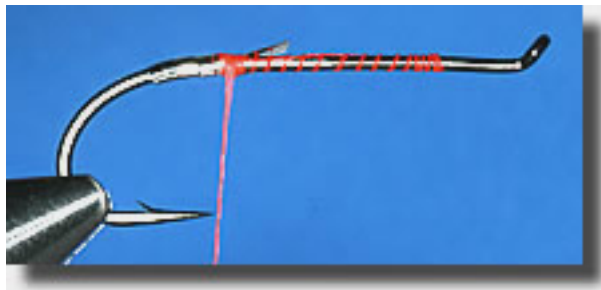
**Body:** Peacock herl

**Wing:** Fox squirrel

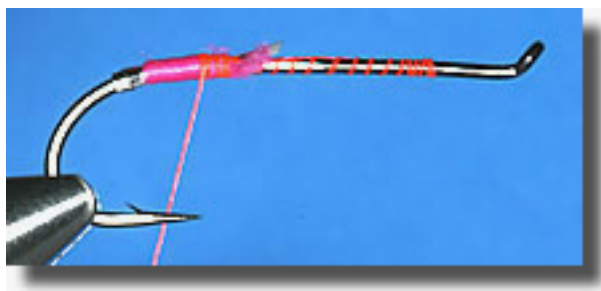
## Tying steps:



1. Before you start tying smash the barb down if you want barbless hooks. Start thread at rear of loop eye to be sure it is closed. Then wind rearward with open spiral to a little in front of the hook point.



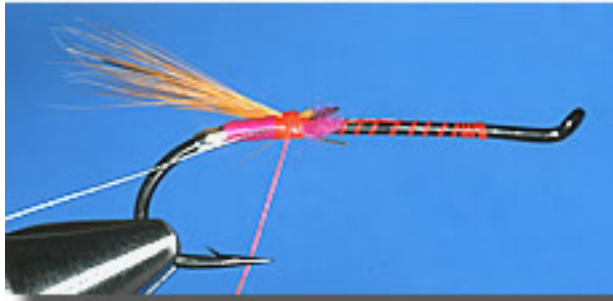
2. If you are using tinsel that is gold on one side and silver on the other, tie it on with the gold side up. Wind thread rearward over it to a point slightly in front of the barb. Return thread to tie in point. When the tinsel is wrapped forward it will turnover so the silver side shows. Secure tinsel and trim excess.



3. Tie on the UniStretch and wrap it with a firm pull so it lays on flat and smooth. Leave some of the silver tinsel showing. Tie down with two or three thread winds.



4. Select a small bunch of fur from the underside of a fox squirrel tail. Clean out under fur and stack hair. Tie on fibers so they extend about a quarter of the tail length past bend of hook. Tie them on near side of hook so thread torque will move fibers to top of hook. (This assumes that the thread is wound away from the tier over the top of the hook.)



5. Tie on two pieces of fine oval tinsel. The counter wrap piece goes on the far side of the hook, and the other piece goes on the tier's side of the hook.



6. Take about 4-5 or more peacock herls. Trim ends of the herl, and tie them in. Lay the near side tinsel in with the herls. Spin herls lightly so peacock will stay together. Wrap herls and tinsel forward, secure and trim excess.



7. Spiral the counter wrap rib forward, secure and trim excess. (Counter wrap means opposite direction from thread and herl wrap.) Tom varies the number of wraps to have a fly that looks good to him. He said three or four wraps, but looking at the fly in high resolution I count five turns. Therefore, on this particular fly at this particular tying session five looked good.



8. Remove a small bunch of hair off the back of a fox squirrel skin, clean out under fur and stack it. Sometimes Tom will build up the front of the body to make the wing stick up higher. Steelheads probably do not care if wing sticks up high or not. Position wing so it reaches about halfway along the tail. Tie the squirrel hair in as firmly as possible because it is a hard hair and tends to slip.



9. Select a feather with fairly long fibers (barbs) because they will give a lot of movement. However, not too much webbing. Tie on feather and hold it up to fold the hackle. When folding pull the barbs back so the insides of the barbs are facing each other. This helps the fibers point rearward when the feather is wrapped. Put on three or four wraps of hackle, secure and trim excess. Stroking barbs back while wrapping helps to make them point rearward.



10. Build a fairly large head, and lay the hackle fibers back a little. Leave bare hook shank between the eye and the head so a person can use a riffle hitch. Put on a little head cement and you are finished.

All you need now is a place to go fishing. The riffle hitch can go farther back on the fly, behind the head or wing to make it move differently. I used only the standard hitch so I am not sure how alternate positions or even having the leader come out toward you, under the fly or opposite side work. But I read about them on the Internet. If you have time, experiment. Remember, Tom has a lot of success just fishing it deep. So I spent a lot of time talking about a technique that Tom doesn't use, but others do. Main thing, get out there and have fun.

Please Credit FFF Website or FFF Clubwire with any use of the pattern.  
You can direct any questions or comments to FOM at [flyofthemoth@fedflyfishers.org](mailto:flyofthemoth@fedflyfishers.org)