

## PEACOCK SPIDER



By John Newbury and Bob Bates

John Newbury tied this great steelhead pattern at the 2009 Federation of Fly Fishers Conclave in Loveland, Colorado. He wrote the following history and tying instructions.

John said: “The Peacock Spider was first tied during the winter of 1985 or 1986 after receiving a complete India blue peacock skin. I really liked the blue neck feathers, and when I saw the peacock blue embroidery tinsel in a fabric store, I knew the two were made for each other. My steelhead flies fairly simple, quick, and easy to tie. This is because I am always losing them or giving them away!!! I believe steelhead flies are all about color, size, and sometimes silhouette. The Peacock Spider, Tangerine and Plum Crazy have been my most productive steelhead flies now for several seasons. (Descriptions of the Tangerine and Plum Crazy follow the tying instructions.)

In the steelhead rivers of British Columbia, I use a 2/0 hook and in the rivers of Washington, Idaho, Oregon; I use a #2 and sometimes a #4.”

John is not alone in praising the Peacock Spider. Fenton Roskelly, outdoor writer, tried the fly and wrote about it for The Spokesman Review, November 8, 2000. His headline was:

**“Peacock Spider was winning ticket to catch steelhead.”**

“... The next time I visited the Ronde, the water was low and clear. However, there were few steelhead that day. I fished the Shadow drift, one of the best producers, but didn't touch a fish. Then I fished the first bend.

As the Peacock Spider started to straighten out below me, a steelhead took the fly. A few minutes later, after the

6-pound fish had jumped a couple of times, I eased the fly out of its mouth and watched the steelhead vanish into the deeper water.

The Clearwater River was clear and low when I arrived at one of my favorite drifts a few days later. I pulled on my chest waders, rigged up my 9 1/2-foot graphite rod and tied on a Peacock Spider. Two men carrying 15- or 16-foot Spey rods were working their way down the drift.

They seemed to be experts and I figured they wouldn't miss any steelhead as they worked the water. However, a few minutes after starting down the drift, a steelhead took the Peacock Spider, jumped three or four times, took out all my line and some backing. I was trembling a little as I released the 10-pound fish.

The two men walked back upstream about half an hour later. One of them told me they had fished the drift for three hours and hadn't hooked a fish. ...”

Most steelheaders use a floating line and a quartering downstream cast. However, some use a sink tip or full sinking line to fish a little deeper.

### Materials list:

**Hook:** Tiemco TMC 7999 2 & 2/0

**Thread:** Monocord, red 6/0

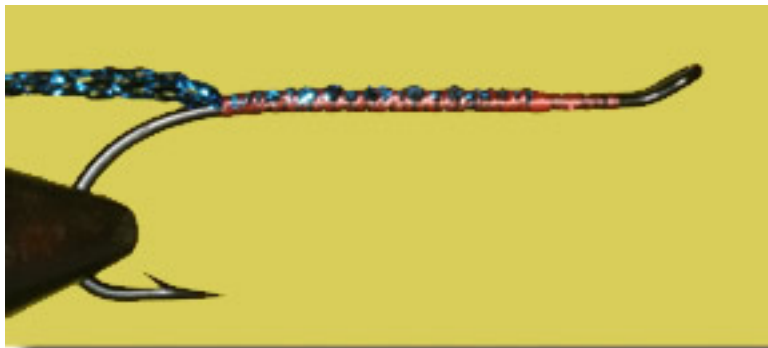
**Body:** Embroidery tinsel, Plastic Canvas 10, color PM 62 (peacock blue)

**Hackles:** Peacock breast feathers

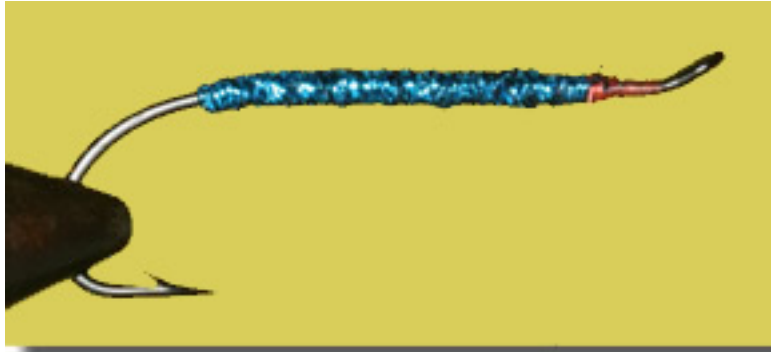
### Tying steps:



1. Put on a thread base on hook and leave thread near front of hook.



2. Attach embroidery tinsel and wrap thread over it to the rear and then forward again to about two eye widths behind the eye.



3. Wrap embroidery tinsel forward, secure and trim. If one likes, some loon hard head product can be applied to the tinsel, and set aside to dry, before attaching hackle. This makes the tinsel indestructible, and also adds weight throughout the shank.



4. Tie on peacock feathers. I use 3 large peacock breast feathers on the # 2/0 hooks, and on the #2 and slightly smaller hooks only 2 feathers,. I tie these in by the base, as you only get about two and a half turns out of each feather.



5. Begin winding the feathers. When winding, stroke fibers back, and while winding, slightly twist the stem to keep the fibers perpendicular to the hook shank. It is important to stroke the feather back with each wrap forward and twist the stem as needed. Basically, you are folding the feather as you wind it. Tie off feather, and ends will become part of the collar.

#### **Closing Comments:**

These great steelhead patterns are easy to tie. The bodies of the Peacock Spider and the ones below are all tied using embroidery tinsel or metallic needlepoint yarn or ribbon, available in most yarn shops. However, you might have to look around for the blue peacock feathers. Most fly shops do not stock the blue body feathers. However, usually you can have the owner to order them for you. Sometimes it will take a little time because most suppliers require a minimum order size, and your fly shop owner might not be ready to reorder. If you have a friend with a peacock or two ask to be permitted to pick up the drops. My daughter sent me a bunch of dropped peacock feathers from birds wandering around her apartment building. Sometime you luck out. (Bob)

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You can direct any questions or comments to FOM at [flyofthethmonth@fedflyfishers.org](mailto:flyofthethmonth@fedflyfishers.org)

## TANGERINE



John commented: “On the Tangerine and Plum Crazy, I am using dyed mallard flank feathers. These feathers take dye easy, and breathe well in the water. I like using two colors that either complement each other or have contrasting hues. These feathers I tie in by the tip, as they're a larger feather, and you can get more wraps. When winding hackle, remember to stroke back and twist stem as you wind forward each time. As you wind you will notice the stem getting larger. At this point, tie off the feather, and snip off excess.”

### **Material list:**

**Hook:** Tiemco TMC 7999 size 2 & 2/0

**Thread:** Monocord, Red 6/0

**Body:** Holographic ribbon by Fyre Werks color FH6 (red)

**Hackle:** Dyed mallard flank feathers, claret and orange

## PLUM CRAZY



### Materials list:

**Hook:** Tiemco TMC 7999 size 2 and 2/0

**Thread:** Monocord, Red 6/0

**Body:** Holographic ribbon by Fyre Werks, color FH7 (plum)

**Hackle:** Dyed mallard flank feathers, purple and cerise