

Steelhead Poopah Pattern Recipe:

Tying the Steelhead Poopah

There are two primary techniques for fishing steelhead; swinging and nymphing. In the early season when river temperatures are warmer, steelhead will willingly take a swinging fly either under the surface, or skated on the surface. But as fall wears on and water temperatures chill down, nymph fishing usually out produces swinging techniques significantly. Year's ago on my very first steelhead trip I fished the Rogue River in Oregon. At the time I had no idea how to fish for steelhead or what patterns to use. A friend told me, fish for them just like you do for trout. For that trip I tied a few of my favorite trout nymph patterns and tried fishing them under an indicator. The guide that day thought I was crazy, as he'd never seen a nymphing technique on the Rogue. But after landing 7 fish I was hooked on steelhead fishing and the guide was a convert to nymphing. The top producer that day was a size 8 Hare's Ear Nymph, which was an excellent imitation for some of the stoneflies present in the river. Ever since that time, I have been experimenting with adaptations of my favorite trout nymph patterns and the Steelhead Poopah one of the results.

Pattern notes:

The Steelhead Poopah pattern is effective for one simple reason; it is a close approximation of natural caddis found in many of our rivers throughout California. For steelhead, I like to add flash to most of my patterns, and on the Steelhead Poopah I've substituted Olive Krystal Flash for the antennae. Secondly, hook selection for steelhead is critical. For this pattern I've chosen a size 12 Tiemco 2457 scud hook. I like the scud hook because it allows me to stick with the smaller size for this fly, but maintain a wider gape allowing better hooking of these magnificent fish. Additionally, the 2457 is a 1X heavy wire hook. I tried a lighter wire hook initially on this pattern and learned quickly that steelhead can bend a light wire hook without any problem! For the bead I will often use Tungsten Beads when I anticipate fishing deeper or faster water. But I also don't hesitate to add weight to the leader if I need to get down.

Steelhead Poopah Pattern Recipe:

Hook: Tiemco 2457 Scud Hook in sizes 10-14
Bead: Copper or Black
Thread: Brown or Black
Underbody: Olive Krystal Flash
Body: Cinnamon Medium Vernille
Rib: Copper Wire
Legs: Partridge
Antennae: 4-5 strands of olive Krystal Flash
Thorax: Mahogany or Black Ostrich



Tying Instructions:

Step 1: Fit the bead onto the hook, place the hook in the vice and tie on thread at the thorax position. Attach a 6 inch piece of fine copper wire and wind to the point of the hook just above the barb. Attach 4-6 strands of fine olive Krystal Flash.



Step 2: Take a piece of Vernille and singe the end with a lighter to form a slightly tapered body. Pass the material into the flame very briefly; too long and it will catch fire!

Step 3: Wind the Krystal Flash over the hook to form the underbody and tie off at the thorax. Attach a ½ inch piece of the Vernille at the thorax leaving the tapered end extending slightly beyond the hook bend.





Step 4: Wind the copper wire over the Vernille to form a rib with 4 to 5 wraps. Tie off at the thorax and clip the excess.

Step 5: Attach 4 strands of Krystal Flash at the thorax and trim slightly shorter than the length of the body to form the antennae. Strip a quarter inch segment of a partridge feather. Tie on at the rear of the thorax and allow the material to rotate to the underside of the hook to form the legs.



Step 6: Attach a strand of two of ostrich herl at the thorax and wind forward through the thorax. Tie off, clip the excess and whip finish to complete the fly.