

WATERHEN BLOA

Produced by Michael Pattinson - February 2021.



History

A detailed and authoritative account of the history and origins of North Country Spider patterns can be found in the book by Robert L Smith, "The North Country Fly". The tying instructions, to be found in T E Pritt's book, "North Country Flies" first published in 1885 list the following:-

Wings – Hackled feather from the inside of a Water-Hen wing.

Body – Yellow silk, dubbed with the fur of the Water-Rat or Water Vole (a protected species now)

Pritt states that the fly is indispensable in March and April and is a good Grayling fly all through the winter months. The term Bloa is a North Country word meaning slate blue/grey. It is very unlikely that Trout will mind if mole fur is used as a substitute for the Water Rat and it would be a pity to sacrifice a Water hen for the sake of a few suitably small, softly mobile, greyish feathers taken from another species, but the purist may insist on using the original materials. It is also worth saying that the Waterhen or Moorhen, *Gallinura chloropus*, has a red bill base and is not the same as the Coot, *Fulica atra*, which has a white bill and bald forehead – hence the expression bald as a coot!

Tying the Fly

It is easy to tie this fly but not so easy to tie a really good version. The thread wraps should be made with a "rope like" thread, achieved by spinning the bobbin to tighten up the fibres and each wrap should be butted up to the next one to give the impression of a segmented insect body. The Mole fur dubbing must

be very sparse so that the yellow thread colour shows through. This is achieved by waxing the thread and then dabbing a ball or pinch of Mole fur onto the waxed thread to make it stick. As with all tying, the last couple of steps can ruin a fly. Cut the thread close to the eye and add the smallest amount of varnish to the final wraps to secure the thread. If any varnish leaks onto the base of the feather barbs they will become brittle and break off.

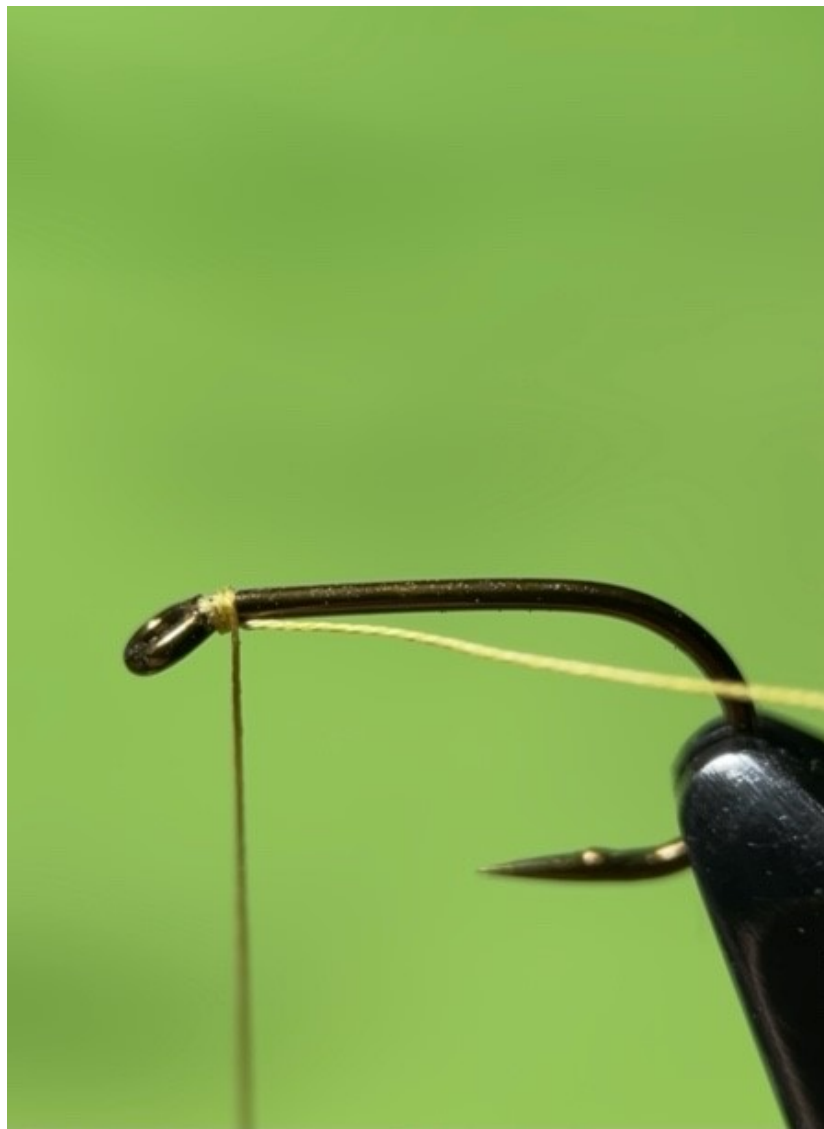
Fishing the Waterhen Bloa

Most effective when fished early in the season or late in September but Spiders can work almost any time and are also good on still waters. Generally fished on the river with an upstream cast as a team of three to represent sub-surface nymphs.

Method



1. Choose a wet fly hook size 12 and pinch the barb down



2. Wrap on three turns of WAXED Pearsalls No:4 Yellow just behind the eye



3. Find a suitable feather (originally from under the wing of a Waterhen)



4. Remove the feather from the wing



5. Hold the feather by the tip on the right, stroke the fibres to the left. This is the top view



6. Invert the feather and carefully peel off the lower barbs leaving the tip intact



7. Tie the feather on top, the dark side nearest the eye Use close turns of thread. Work down the shank to half way. Cut off the remains of feather tip and thread with a backward sloping cut. Continue the turns till level with the hook point



8. Wax the hanging thread and apply a very small amount of mole fur (originally water vole !!) evenly to the thread. The wax is made to a secret recipe by melting beeswax, violin resin and castor oil together.



9. Gently Spin the bobbin to tighten up the thread and wind it back up the shank in touching turns until the thread meets the feather stalk at the tie in point.



10. Gripping the feather in the hackle pliers take three turns round the shank towards the eye. Then wind the thread carefully through the barbs and secure them in place at the eye with a whip finish or a half hitch tool.

© 2021 Nidderdale Angling Club