

# Flyfishing & TYING JOURNAL

SPRING 2011



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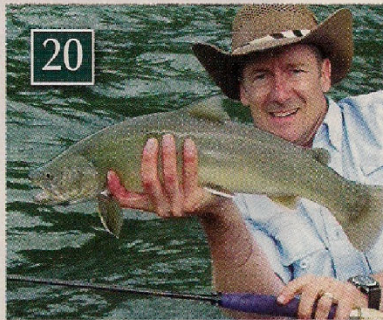
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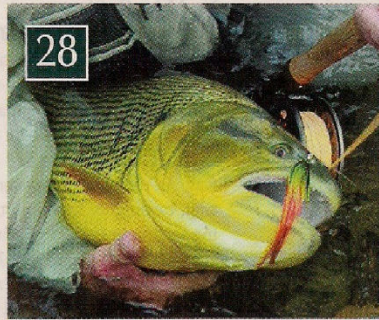
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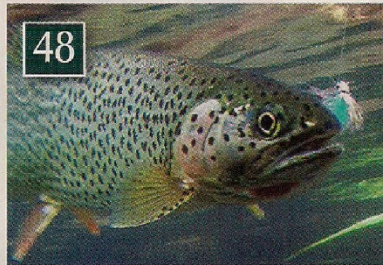
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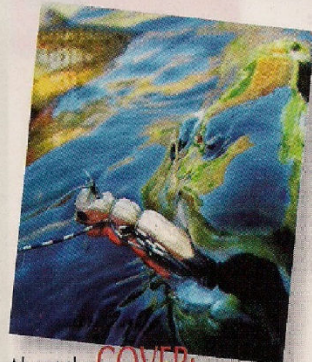
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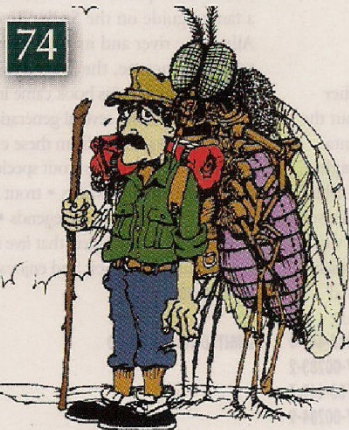


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## MODERN STEELHEAD FLIES

# The Evolution of Articulation

## Part Three: Tube Flies

By Kevin Erickson

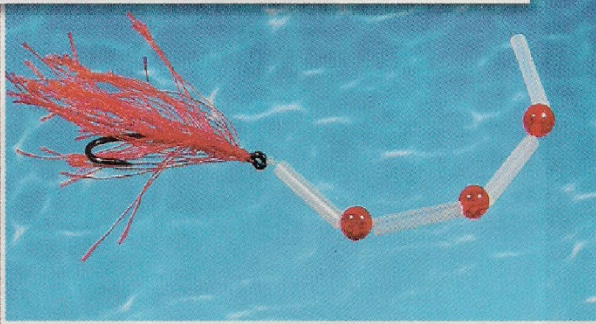
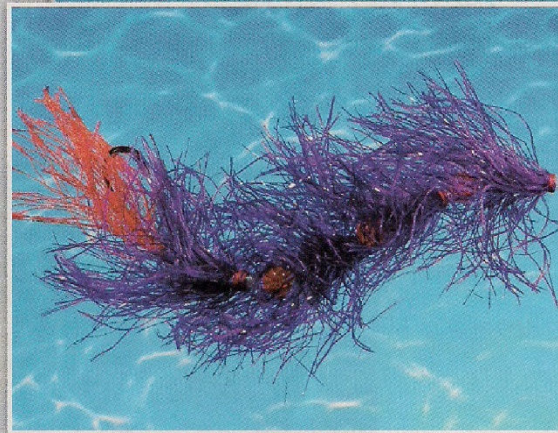
Tube flies have been around for over a hundred years with standardized versions acknowledged from the 1930's and 40's on. Tube flies are an articulated fly by definition—and I'll introduce some new twists on this later. They offer many advantages in all types of fishing, especially for steelhead, where you need to cover a variety of water depths and conditions. Here are some important features:

- Fly size and style isn't dependent on hook size or style. You can have a large light fly that's easy to cast.
- Hooks are placed at the rear of the pattern resulting in less short takes and more hook-ups.
- Tube choice is limitless. Different weights, colors, sizes, shapes and lengths can all be used.
- Less hook leverage; with a short-shank tube hook, more fish are landed.
- If the hook dulls or breaks it's easy to replace.
- Various hook choices allow the angler to use hook styles suited to the fish and water conditions.
- Incorporate cones and beads to add weight to the flies and/or alter their swimming action.

Entire product lines have been developed over the years for tube-fly tying. HMH ([www.hmhvises.com](http://www.hmhvises.com)) has a series of vises, tools and precut packaged tubes of various materials in differing lengths. Another innovative company located in Finland is Eumer ([www.eumertube.com](http://www.eumertube.com)). They have developed a unique series of brass tubes with various lengths and turned shapes and coneheads in a rainbow of colors to combine with plastic tubing to give a big variety of creative tying options.

Tying the tube fly takes no special skills, just the right tools. There are vises made especially for the task, but tube-fly tying adaptors work fine in my experience. You simply clamp the adaptor in any standard tying vise instead of the hook. Select the correct size pin and insert it into the tube. Push the pin and tube against the base and tighten the screw to lock the tube tightly in place and you're ready to tie.

There are a couple of points to be aware of. First, use tying cement on your first layer of thread to prevent sliding and/or twisting on the slick, smooth tube surface, especially plastic. Second, be sure not to get too close to the either end of the tube. Some tubes come with flared ends, others don't. Even with flared ends, don't go too close. Be



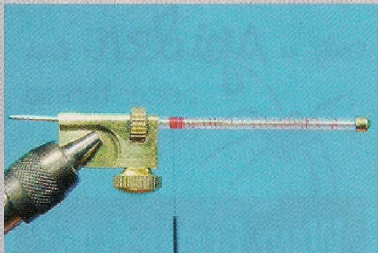
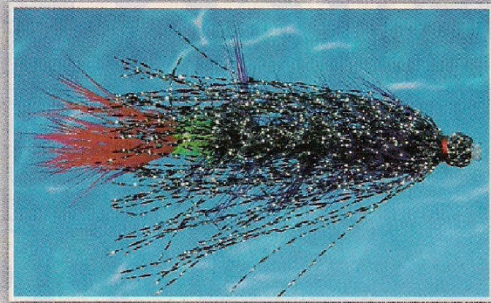
sure the time spent at the vise doesn't come apart on the water due to running out of room.

Articulated tube flies are a relatively new variation. My new twist is to increase their movement by using smaller tubes separated by beads of various materials. By stacking the shorter tubes you achieve articulated action with endless variety. Even just two tubes together swim well and three or more are amazing in the way they undulate with a lifelike movement. Try adding a cone or metal bead to the front for extra weight and a diving action.

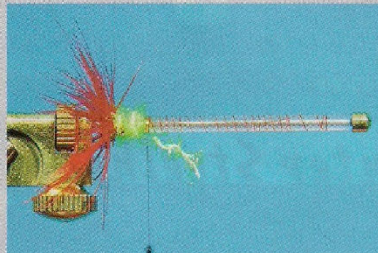
Give tubes a try on your next trip and hold on!

## Green Butt Krystal Bullet Steelhead Tube Fly

- Body Core:** Tubing of choice in material, diameter and length.  
**Thread:** Red.  
**Tail Wrap:** Red saddle hackle; two to three turns only.  
**Butt:** Chartreuse Cactus Chenille; smaller than used for the body.  
**Ribbing:** Silver holographic braid twisted into a rope.  
**Body:** Black Pearl New Age Chenille.  
**Hackle:** Purple saddle; palmered over body secured with ribbing.  
**Head/Collar:** Grizzly Krystal Flash Black/White tied bullet head style.



**Step 1:** Secure the tube in your tube vise or tube-fly tool and attach the thread and wrap it to the back of the tube. Add cement to lock the thread.



**Step 2:** Attach a red saddle hackle feather. Make two or three wraps, tie off and trim excess. Attach the chenille for the butt. Make two to three turns to form a ball, tie off and trim the excess.



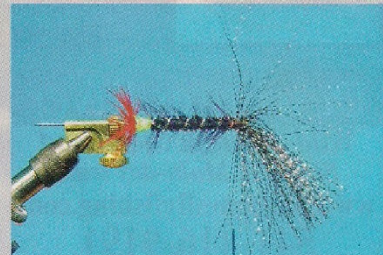
**Step 3:** Attach the chenille for the body and the ribbing material securely right where the butt ends. Wrap the chenille forward, leaving a space in front for the bullet head to be formed. Tie off and trim the excess. Attach the hackle by the base end and prepare to wrap it back wet fly style. I have found a palmered hackle adds greatly to the lift and separation of the material used for the collar. This can be added to any design to enhance the fly's action in the water.



**Step 4:** Wrap the hackle in the normal direction with open spirals going back to the rear of the body. Using hackle pliers helps in that their weight will hold the hackle in position while you proceed to the next step.



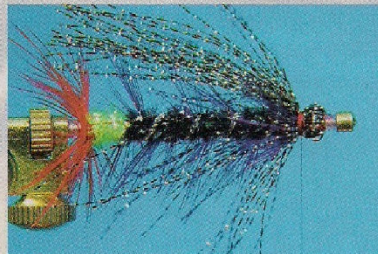
**Step 5:** Wrap the rib forward, weaving it side-to-side as you wrap over both the body and hackle. This helps keep from trapping fibers under the rib as you move forward. Spread the wraps to have a total of only five or six wraps when completed. Secure the rib and trim off the excess.



**Step 6:** Advance your thread to the front of the space you left for the bullet head—but still not too close to the end of the tube. Gather a fair amount (how much is this? Only experience will teach you) of Krystal Flash for the head and collar and clip away from the bundle of fibers in the package. Trim one end evenly. Flip the bunch over in your right (for right-handed tiers) hand to where the trimmed end is facing left.



**Step 7:** Hold in position over the front end of the tube and through a few wraps of thread around it and the tube with your left hand. Now spin the fibers like you would a deer-hair head. You may need to slowly loosen a wrap or two to help coax the material around the tube. Once evenly encircling the tube, tie the stubs down securely and move the thread back to the front of the body.



**Step 8:** Pull all of the fibers together to the right of the head area and trim to the final length. A bit long is better as you can always trim more later if needed. Now pull all of the fibers back to the left and into their final position. Help spread out any uneven areas to achieve a smooth evenly rounded head. Wrap tightly and finish over the collar of thread you just wrapped. Cement and you're done!

*Kevin W. Erickson worked as a full-time professional in the fly-fishing business for over 25 years. He outfitted anglers, booked fly-fishing trips worldwide and still teaches fly-casting and tying classes for all skill levels. He has traveled extensively and acted as host of angling groups to both fresh and saltwater destinations around the globe.*

*He currently has a "real" job in the software industry in Beaverton, Oregon.*

Visit Kevin's website at [www.professorfeather.com](http://www.professorfeather.com)

