

Flyfishing

FALL 2010

& TACKLE JOURNAL

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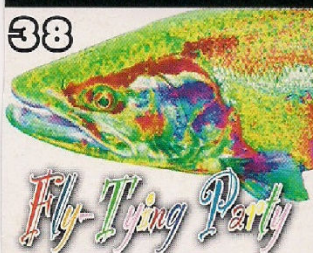
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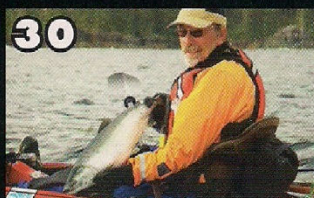
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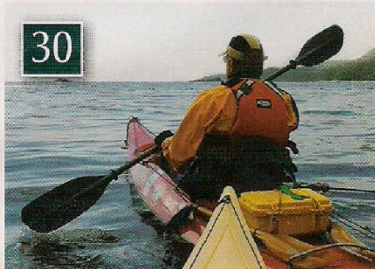
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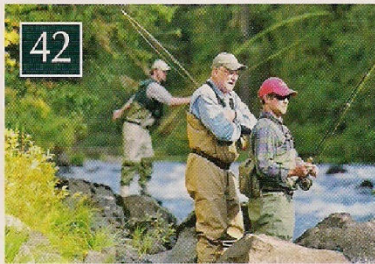
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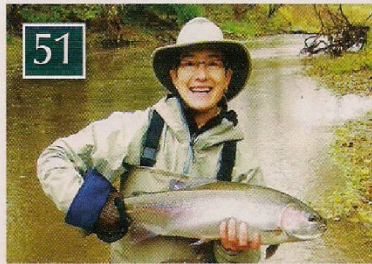
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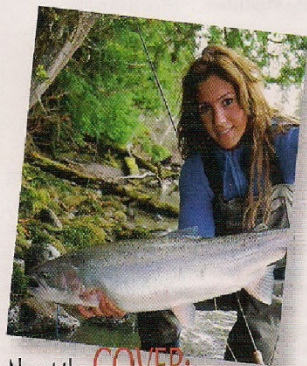
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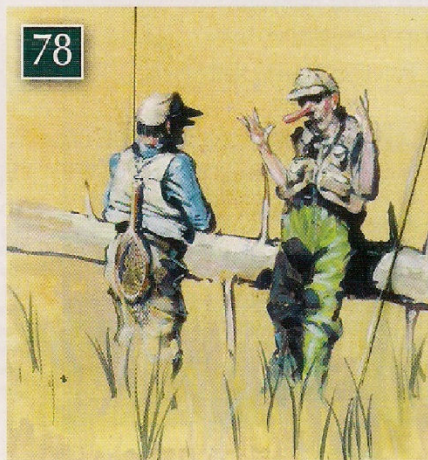
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About the **COVER**:
APRIL VOKEY WITH A BEAUTIFUL
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DAVE HALL/ARTWORK

Modern Steelhead Flies

The Evolution of Articulation

Kevin Erickson

Part One: Waddington Shanks

This series will delve into the modern versions of articulated steelhead flies in use today. Articulated, meaning jointed and/or flexible flies, includes classic designs but also minnows, leeches, and other patterns that have become popular within the last twenty years or so in Northwest steelheading circles. They allow the angler to present a larger, more active fly to the fish without having to use traditional large, long-shank, heavy-wire hooks to achieve the same size fly. Articulated flies also have an enticing swimming action that the older fly styles could never match.

Decades ago, anglers fished with up to size 6/0 standard and long-shank traditional salmon hooks for winter and spring steelhead fly-angling. Let me tell you, hearing those not-so-miniature harpoons go whizzing by at high speed over a day's fishing left you feeling like you'd just survived combat duty! They required long rods and large line weights to control them. One depended on a thinly dressed fly and the weight of the hook itself to penetrate the heavy flows. You also needed 10- to 15-foot leaders with 12- to 16-pound tippet (01X to 04X) to control and turn over these large flies. The heavy leader also gave you half a chance of hooking a fish well enough to land it. The same thick wire

that helped quickly sink the fly also made it difficult to get good penetration on hookup.

Today's articulated flies present the same size, and even larger, flies in relatively light means and utilize smaller thinner-wire hooks that allow a good hookup on the take. I use split rings, common in conventional-tackle lure-fishing, to attach the hook on long single Waddington shanks, and also for my special Chain Link Leech fly. Using the split rings offers multiple advantages:

1. If the hook becomes too dull to be resharpened or gets bent out, you can simply detach and replace it with a fresh one, saving the "fly" for further use.
2. If conditions change drastically and you want a lighter or heavier hook, it's easy to change even on the water.
3. The rings provide additional weight which helps keep it submerged and resist "planing" to the surface.
4. With my Chain Link Leech system, you can add or subtract body sections to increase or decrease the fly's size or change the color schemes. The combinations are limitless. And the swimming motion of the fly is unbeatable. *Just be sure to check regulations on the waters you fish to see what's legally allowed.*



Green Butt Chain-Link Leech

Hook: Light-wire Salmon Dry Fly Hook, sizes 1/0 to 6.

Thread: Red.

Hook Tail: Red hackle fibers tied on the hook itself, extending a hook length beyond the bend.

Hook Body: Chartreuse chenille or yarn from point to near eye.

Body: 4 sections: Each tied on a 12mm Waddington Shank. Colors in order from back to front: Black, red, black, and purple. You can use long-fibered synthetic yarns (Glitter Yarn, etc.), natural furs on the skin (cross-cut rabbit strips, etc.) or feathers (marabou, etc.) wrapped over the shank to form a body section.

Connectors: Small split rings joining body sections and one in the rear for attaching the hook.

Optional: Bead chain or Lead Eyes on the front body section.



Step One: Attach hook in the vise. Wrap your thread around the middle of the shank and then back to a position above the point. Select a fairly heavy amount of red hackle fibers or hackle “fluff” (the marabou-like fibers at the base of every hackle feather) and attach above the point. Try to get long fibers that will extend a hook length beyond the tie-in point. Then attach the chartreuse chenille and advance the thread up to the eye. Wrap the chenille evenly up to the eye and secure. Whip finish and cement the head. Set aside.



Step Two: Insert the first shank section in the vise by the angled up “eye.” This is what is normally considered the front of the shank where the tippet would be attached in the same way as traditional up-eye salmon hooks. I prefer to use the straight, or “ring”, eye for connecting my tippet. This slight bend of the eye creates an offset from one section to the next which greatly increases the swimming action. I also prefer to use a Duncan loop for leader attachment. This open-loop knot maximizes the ability of the fly to swing and swim without any restriction imposed by a conventional clinch or other rigid attachment.

Attach the thread and wrap back to the eye at the back of the shank where it is secured in the vise. Attach the material of choice for this body section, advance the thread to the other eye and wrap the material tightly forward. Securely tie it off and trim the excess. Whip finish the thread and trim the excess. Cement the wraps of the head. Repeat for the remaining sections.



Step Three: Once the sections are complete, join them together with the split rings. A small screwdriver can help hold the rings open while joining, but if you like this fly style, you WILL want to get a pair of split-ring pliers—they make life MUCH easier.

Step Four: Finally, add the ring in the back of the last body section and attach the hook using it. You’re now ready to fish!

I encourage you to contact me with any questions or suggestions for other patterns you’d like to see tied and featured. Email me at info@modernclassicsflytying.com; visit my website at www.modernclassicsflytying.com.

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.

Also a published author, his work has been published in Flyfishing & Tying Journal and Randall Kaufmann’s epic Bonefishing.

His fly tying is highly sought after by collectors worldwide, especially his unique “Photo Fly Plates” and has also been featured in publications including Randy Stetzer’s bestselling book Flies: The Best 1000.

Kevin currently has a “real” job in the software industry in Beaverton, Oregon.

Visit Kevin's website at www.professorfeather.com