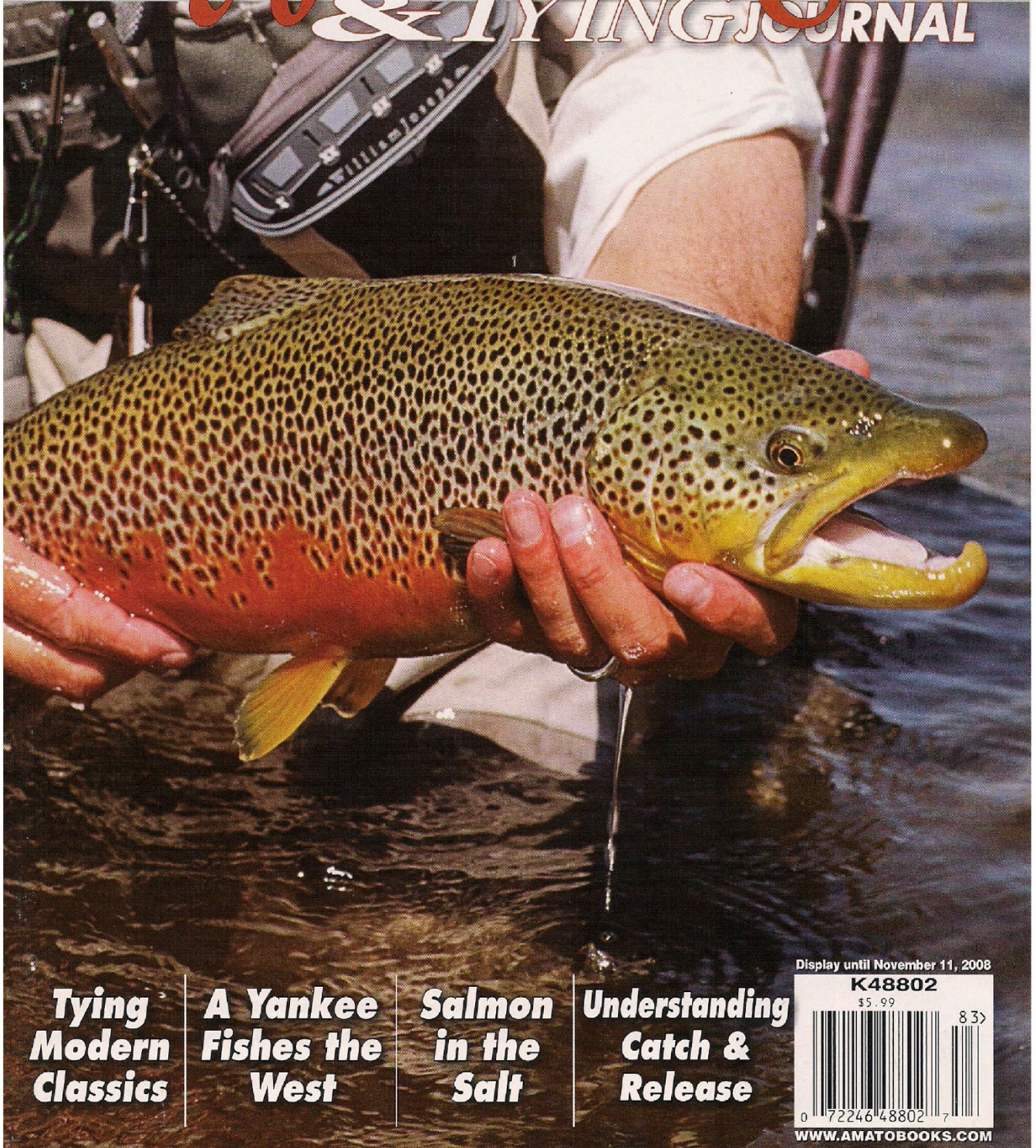


Flyfishing

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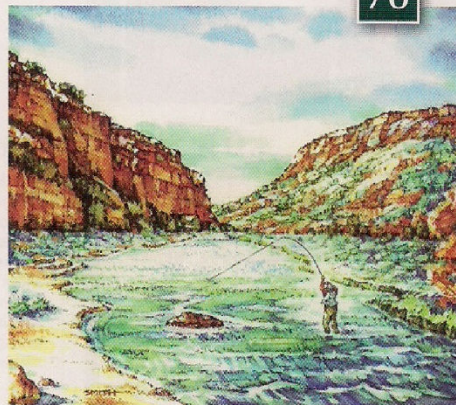
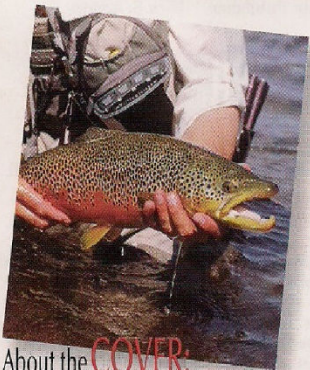
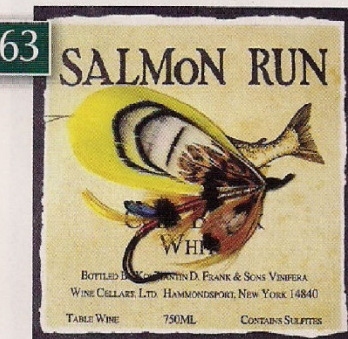
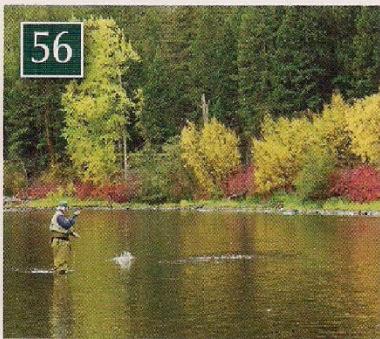
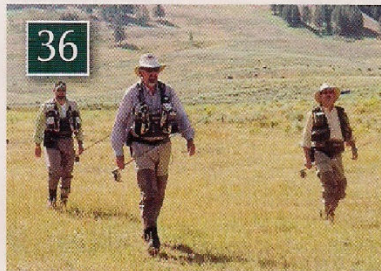
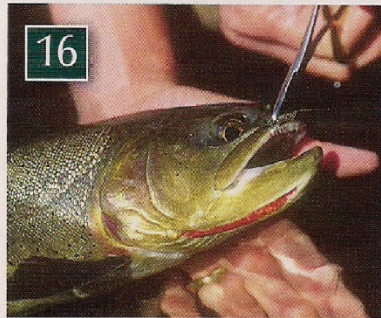
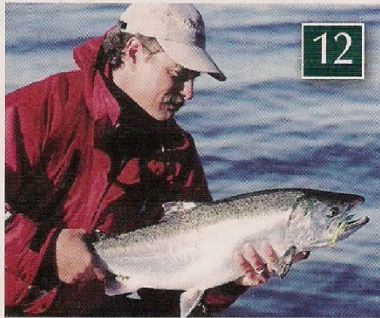
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THOMAS AMES JR. PHOTO

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Tying the Modern Classics

Part One: The General Practitioner



Color variations abound. Some personal favorites are: white, chartreuse, black, purple, olive, and rusty brown.

by Kevin W. Erickson

Most traditional Atlantic salmon fly patterns were developed in the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries. Elaborate in design and complex to create, they often contain up to two dozen of the most exotic materials imaginable in each fly. The “full dressed” flies of old are pleasing to the eye, but involved to tie and painful to lose when fishing. This relative “newcomer,” however, has a modest makeup and is a simple pattern to produce.

Originated in the 1950's by Colonel Esmund Drury, the General Practitioner is thought to suggest prawn, shrimp and/or crayfish. The long, leggy profile with the prominent eyes protruding on top does tend to evoke an image of a crustacean. While designed for their Eastern cousin, this fly is a favorite for Pacific salmon and steelhead, as well as other species. Fished either dead-drift or on a long, slow swing in moving water, or with a combination of short and long strips in still water, simply put—it catches fish.

Often considered mainly a cold-water winter pattern in moving water, the GP, as it is often affectionately called, is

productive year around. It is a recommended pattern in Bill McMillan's update on the classic book *Greased Line Fishing for Salmon and Steelhead*. It is also an effective fly, even in larger sizes, in clear low-water summer flows as a wake-up call to sometimes dour fish.

Variations are consistent for warm-water species as crayfish suggestions and work just as well for bigger trout in both moving and still water. How about for you flats anglers, as a small lobster or mantis shrimp imitation? The list is endless. Whatever you fish for, give them a try; you'll be glad you did.

General Practitioner

Hook: Standard or Low Water Salmon Hook. 2X to 4X long sizes 6 to 6/0.

Thread: Red.

Tail: Orange bucktail or similar material.

Head: Small golden pheasant breast feather tied flat.

Body: Orange yarn or chenille.

Rib: Oval gold.

Hackle: Orange palmered behind rib. Two feathers are needed.

Eyes: Golden pheasant tippet in a “V” shape tied flat at middle of shank.

Back: Golden pheasant breast feather tied flat, front and rear.



1 After attaching the thread, wrap back to a position between the barb and point. Proportions can be varied. For a deeper-sinking version, a conehead or metal bead could be added first or wire for weighting wrapped around the shank. Traditionally the fly is tied without any added weight and the depth controlled through the fishing approach or line style.

Measure a clump of selected tail material. Traditionally bucktail is called for, but Kid goat, fox hair, or even synthetic hair could be used. Bucktail is a buoyant material, so a good choice if you wish to fish this fly in shallower summer flows. Goat or other solid-fiber materials are a better choice if you want to penetrate the depths in heavy winter or roiling spring flows. I prefer not to stack the hair for a more natural tapered appearance. Make the tail as long as the hook shank and tie in above the barb. On top of the hair, tie in a single golden pheasant breast feather extending about a third of the tail length to lay flat.

2 Prepare the smaller hackle by exposing the tip. Hold the tip while then stroking the remaining fibers toward the base, bending them down and away from the stem in the process. Tie in all of the following materials on the underside of the hook. First the hackle, right at the point where the fibers are bent down away from the tip. Then the ribbing and body material, having the excess material extend to the middle of the shank. Trim off the excess.

Advance the thread to the middle of the hook. Wrap the body material and secure, then wrap three and one half turns of ribbing. This can be reduced to two and one-half turns on smaller sizes. The extra half wrap is to get the ribbing to be tied off on top of the body. When tied off, don't trim off the excess. Leave it hanging off the eye end of the hook. Grab the hackle gently and double it by bending the fibers on both sides of the stem back toward the dull side of the feather. All fibers should be laying back-to-back on one side of the stem, good side showing. Start wrapping it tightly right up behind the ribbing to the top of the hook. Tie it off and trim off the excess. Now take the rib and fold it back and then tie over the fold. This will provide the ribbing for the remainder of the body.

3 Open your scissor blades wide. Place them above the bare portion of the shank. Slide them down and back toward the bend from mid-shank, catching the hackle fibers on top of the body between the blades and ending up down near the body. Cut off the fibers between the blades. Repeat as needed to remove the hackle fibers from the top of the body. This removes excess material and provides a flat base for the back and eyes.

4 Prepare a golden pheasant breast feather to tie in flat on top of the body. Length is generally to midway back on the head feather previously tied in above the tail. Also prepare the golden pheasant tippet eyes. Trim out the center of the feather, leaving a "V" shape with the remaining fibers. These should extend to the end of the hook shank above the point. Also remove the remaining fibers outside of the good fibers down to the base. Stripping these off is fine. Place a drop of cement (Dave's Flexament preferred for its tough, flexible finish) on the tips of the eyes to hold them together during both handling and fishing.

5 Tie in the back flat with the shiny side up, centered over the body. Tie in the eyes next. They should be spread out as they are on the feather stem and tied in right at the stem, yet without any stem showing. Trim the excess of both materials once secured.

6 Attach additional body material on the bottom and the larger hackle in the same manner as the first hackle. You may need to trim the tip back to ensure the fiber length is equal to or longer than the fibers already in place. Allow the excess of the materials to extend no further than two eye-lengths behind the eye. Advance the thread to one eye-length behind where the eye is formed.

Wrap the body back to the thread and tie off. Next, starting at the top of the body where you left off, wrap the same number of turns as previously made to where the thread is, finishing the wraps on the bottom of the hook and tie off. Gently grab the hackle, double it as before, and wrap it to follow tightly behind the ribbing to the thread. Take one extra full turn if you can and then tie off. Trim the excess of all three materials as closely as possible. As in Step 3, trim the hackle from the top of the hook to remove excess material and provide a flat base for the back.

7 Prepare one or two golden pheasant breast feathers in the same manner as the first layer of the back and tie in flat with the shiny side up over the top of the body. Finish building as small a head as possible and secure the thread and then cement. You're done!

Kevin Erickson worked in the fly-fishing business as a full-time professional, including instructing fly-fishing and fly-tying classes, for over 25 years. 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 includes contributions in Randy Stetzer's book *Flies: The Best 1000* and Randall Kaufmann's epic *Bonefishing*. He currently has a "real" job in the software industry in Beaverton, Oregon.

Visit Kevin's website at www.professorfeather.com

