

The Carrot Fly

If anyone read the FlyLife article on dry fly prospecting, you may have noticed the author like to use flies that are quick and easy to tie. This is one of his flies, and it is also in Coulson's Australian Fly Patterns. Whilst it can probably be done in his manner easily in due course, tonight we will focus more on the materials, preparation, and techniques. This fly can be tied quickly, as will be demonstrated, but practicing the full skills and use of tools helps with the finish of the fly, especially for smaller flies. You can even experiment with the different types of hackle pliers.

Broadly speaking, the fly is a little over half the shank in dubbing (about 5/8ths), 3-4 turns of hackle, and a small head (about 1-2mm) when planning your tie to avoid crowding the head.

Seal's fur in this case is perfect due to its flakey hairs. I usually prefer hare's dubbing or micro dubbing, ice spectra dubbing, or microdubbing, because getting a small nymph profile with seal's fur is hard due to its loose, long hairs – but it is that feature that this fly uses. The other dubbings can all be used, but it is harder to get an even “carrot” tapered but scruffy profile around the hook – for me it's usually flat on the sides and scruffy top and bottom. Microflash can also be used to add some sparkle.

Quick Fly



Ingredients

- Red thread (e.g. 6/0)
- Size 12 fly hook
- Short orange hackle
- Orange Seal's Fur or orange microflash

Tools

- Fly vice
- Bobbin holder
- Whip finishing tool/needle handle
- Dubbing wax
- Hackle pliers (optional)
- Scissors/scalpel
- Glue

Good Fly



Ingredients

- Red or brown thread (e.g. 6/0)
- Fluoro pink thread (optional)
- Size 12 fly hook
- Short orange hackle
- Short black hackle
- Mylar tag

Tools

- Fly vice
- Bobbin holder
- Whip finishing tool/needle handle
- Dubbing wax
- Hackle pliers type 1, 2, or 3
- Hackle guard
- Scissors/scalpel
- Glue

Quick Fly

Steps

1. Place hook in fly vice
2. Tie on thread, taking it to the bend
3. Wax well about 2-2.5cm – I like to do three sides for good coverage
4. Tapering from the hook out thicker
Dub pretty loosely – this fly is meant to look scruffy, and taper like a carrot
5. Wind the dubbed thread on, careful not to create “ribbing” by dubbing to dense
6. Kind of whip the dubbing off like you would a hackle, thereby avoiding ruining the nice profile by binding down with dubbed thread, and trim the extra dubbing off with the scissors
7. Take the marabou-like fluff from the base of the hackle feather
8. Tie in the butt just in front of the dubbing, with the feather flaking back over the dubbing.
9. Take the thread forward, to about 2mm short of the eye of the hook.
10. Take 3-4 turns of close-wound hackles, and put the thread back over the hackle 2-3 times to whip it off
11. Trim the hackle feather
12. Whip a head, whip finish, and glue

Good Fly

Steps

1. Crush the barb of the hook if desired
2. Place hook in fly vice
3. Tie on thread, taking it to the bend
4. Lay a small piece of mylar on top of the hook for a tag (tail)
5. Apply a couple of loose turns over the tag near the bend, being careful not to wind the tag around the hook.
6. Pull this tight, and add a couple more wraps.
7. Put a light layer of glue on the thread if desired.
8. Wax well about 2-2.5cm – I like to do three sides for good coverage. A dubbing loop probably doesn't work as well, due to the length of the seal hairs resulting in something more even rather than tapered, creating more of a bottlebrush.
9. Tapering from the hook out thicker
Dub pretty loosely – this fly is meant to look scruffy, and taper like a carrot
10. Wind the dubbed thread on, careful not to create “ribbing” by dubbing to dense
11. Kind of whip the dubbing off like you would a hackle, thereby avoiding ruining the nice profile by binding down with dubbed thread, and trim the extra dubbing off with the scissors
12. Select a pair orange and black hackle feathers roughly the same size. We will only be doing about 3 turns of the orange hackle and 1-2 turns of the black one.
13. Take the marabou-like fluff from the base of the hackle feathers.

Good Fly Continued

14. Palmer the hackles (stroke them against the grain, which encourages them to stand perpendicular to the spine of the feather).
15. Tie in the butt of the orange hackle just in front of the dubbing, with the feather flaking back over the dubbing.
16. Take the thread forward, tying in the second (black) feather about 2mm. If you like, lay it towards the eye to wind the orange hackle easier. Otherwise, if it laying towards the bend as well, you can hang a pair of regular hackle pliers from it so it hangs down out of the way.
You should still have about 2-3mm beyond the feather base to the eye for the head.
17. If you like, tie in some fluoro thread between the two feathers. This will be used to tie off the hackles, and whip the head. If so, take the original (red or brown) thread up near the eye and whip off.
18. Get your hackle pliers and hackle guard ready.
19. Using the hackle pliers (rotating ones provide closer turns), take about three close turns of the orange hackle.
20. Cover the orange hackle with the hackle guard, ensuring the thread (pink if using it) and hackle tip are the eye-side of the guard.
21. Give a couple of good turns to whip in the hackle, and trim the rest of the orange feather off.
22. Take the thread eye-side of the black hackle.
23. Remove the hackle guard.
24. Use the dubbing needle to extract any orange hackle feathers stuck in the thread (i.e. forming a loop).
25. For the next step, think about if you want to use the hackle guard to cover the orange hackle. If so, be careful when you wind on the second hackle for good spacing between the two – not leaving too big a gap, and not crushing the orange hackle.
26. Use the hackle piers again, this time on the black hackle feather, and take 1-2 turns of the black hackle. If you left enough room between the two feathers, you will probably need to bring the hackle back (spiralling in a wide turn around the hook) to just in front of the orange hackle before making the 1-2turns.
27. Whip off the black hackle with a couple of turns, and trim the feather.
28. Whip a head, whip finish.
29. Use the dubbing needle again to pull out any feather loops.
30. Glue the head.
31. Inspect the fly and preen/trim if required.

If you tied both, you will probably find that the good fly has a more even profile, both for the dubbing, and the hackle.

Practicing these skills are also good for tying smaller flies (size 14-18 and smaller), reducing the excess materials (e.g. needing more hackle turns to make up for bad hackle finish) for good floating through lighter weight, and balanced hackle to use the surface tension better.

Other anglers and books use other materials for the Carrot fly as a wet fly. Chartand's **The Art of Fly Tying** uses orange floss (image below from page 181) for the Carrot fly nymph, and orange body glass is also used in overseas variants.

