

Fly of the Month

By Mike Ott

What's Old is New Again – Classic Wet Flies

Each month I search magazines, catalogs, the internet, and even other fly fisherman's fly boxes for a "new" fly-of-the-month candidate. Sometimes it's something really new or using some new materials. Sometimes it's just something that is a refinement of another pattern. This month's fly, though, is more of a *style* of fly tying that is enjoying a renaissance in the fly fishing community: Classic-Style Wet Flies.

While many of us grew up fishing these flies, all too often the classics are replaced with the latest and greatest new method or some new fly-of-the-month. However, everything runs in cycles and fly tying and fly fishing are no different. It seems like this summer's fly fishing periodicals all contain articles on classic wet fly tying and fishing techniques: Fly Fisherman, FFF's FLYFISHER, American Angler, etc. My favorite article, though, is Dave Whitlock's "Old School" in Fly Fisherman June-July 2011 issue. Whitlock not only expertly details Davy Wotton's classic wet fly fishing method, but also covers some of the classic-style wet fly patterns. Since this is typically a multiple-fly-technique, I have included several patterns but have omitted the usual step-by-step instructions. The beauty of these classic-style wet flies is that they are not very small, largely use common materials, and are not very difficult or intricate to tie (although they could be if you wanted). These are just a few patterns – a Google search will net you thousands of hits and hundreds more patterns as well as some well done YouTube videos.

Leadwing Coachman

Hook: Mustad 3906 or Dai- Hare's Ear
Tail: Brown Hackle Fibers
Body: Dubbed Hare's Ear
Ribbing: Gold Tinsel or Wire
Hackle: Brown Hen Hackle
Wing: Gadwall Flank or Turkey Wing Quill Segment

Cowdung

Hook: Mustad 3906 or Dai-Riki #070 – Size 12-16
Tail: Olive Hackle Fibers
Body: Olive Silk Floss
Ribbing: Gold Tinsel or Wire
Hackle: live Grizzly Hen Hackle
Wing: Mallard Flank Segment

Leadwing Coachman

Hook: Mustad 3906 or Dai-Riki #070 – Size 12-16
Tag: Gold Tinsel
Body: Peacock Herl
Ribbing: Fine Copper Wire – counter wrapped
Hackle: Dun Hen Hackle
Wing: Natural Gray Mallard Wing Segment

Yellow Sally

Hook: Mustad 3906 or Dai-Riki #070 – Size 12-16
Tail: Red Hackle Fibers
Body: Yellow Silk Floss
Ribbing: Gold Tinsel or Wire
Hackle: Brown Hen Hackle
Wing: Hen Pheasant Wing Segment



Remember simpler is better. Keep these flies slim and somewhat sparse. Also, don't wrap too far back on the hook bend. Your fly body should end directly above the hook barb. On a sproat-bend hook, that is farther forward than you might think. In preparing the wing quill segments for mounting, a light coating of thinned-out Flexament helps keep them under control and makes them easier to tie in. Again – a very light application of cement. However, I use nothing on flank feathers.

If you've fished with Davy Wotton, viewed his video, or read Dave Whitlock's article, you know Davy is cleaning up on Arkansas's White River using a long rod swinging 3-5 classic-style wet flies at a time. You can even go online and purchase a full set of Davy Wotton's wet flies if you want to make sure you get the "right" ones. All that buzz certainly merits some room in you arsenal of flies and techniques.