

FFF Fly of the Month

GOLD RIBBED HARE'S EAR NYMPH



***Webkeepers Note**

Since the inception of the beloved Fly of the Month section of our website, our former webkeeper and all purpose contributor Jim Abbs has kept up this section. Since I personally do not have the expertise of Mr. Abbs the daunting task has been accepted by Bob Bates. Bob is an avid tyer and fisherman from Spokane Washington. Bob has tied flies since 1960 when he started tying small midge patterns for Colorado high country waters. He wrote a fly tying column for his hometown newspaper in Spokane and is now a fly tying instructor when he is not fishing in Washington, Montana, Idaho, or Canada. He's a familiar face at our annual show and greatly appreciated for helping out with yet another endeavor.

Thanks Bob!!

By Bob Bates

Fly tiers like to talk about their delicate dry and emerger fly patterns. However, when they get serious the Gold Ribbed Hare's Ear Nymph usually shows up as one of their favorite flies. It is an all purpose nymph. Its various sizes can imitate nymphs from large dragonflies to tiny mayflies. Probably most people consider it a mayfly nymph imitation. Floating, sink tip and full sinking lines may be used to present it to willing (or hopefully willing) trout. As for retrieves, use any and all you can think of. Also you can suspend it from a strike indicator. It can be used in lakes, ponds, creeks, streams or rivers.

A few years ago I had a chance to test the performance of a Gold Ribbed Hare's Ear Nymph against (please excuse the bad words) an earth worm. I was in a float tube using a floating line and a medium speed hand twist retrieve. A father and son were a short distance away using spin gear, bobbers and the unmentionable things. At first the father told his son that they "would catch all the fish because we are using worms." However, he definitely had second thoughts after my Gold Ribbed Hare's Ear Nymph fooled six or eight rainbows, while their bobbers floated undisturbed.

Many recipe book authors neglect the word Nymph when listing this pattern. Leaving it out is really an error because Gold Ribbed Hare's Ear is an old dry fly pattern. In fact it

might be the original dry fly, circa 1886 or earlier.

The Gold Ribbed Hare's Ear Nymph is also an old pattern, but my references don't help establish a date. At least one person told me that it is traceable to Izaak Walton and Charles Cotton (1600s). I can find instructions to use white rabbit tail for tying a fly so maybe they used other parts of the rabbit as well. There are many variations with the only consistent materials being hare's ear/mask for the abdomen/thorax and a gold rib. In the following recipe, the material used in tying the pictured fly is given first, followed by variations.

The materials are listed in the order they are placed on the hook.

Hook: Mustad 3609B, 9671, 9672; Tiemco 5262, 3761, 200R or other nymph hooks, sizes 6-22

Weight: Optional, 8-12 wraps lead-free wire

Thread: Black 3/0 to 12/0

Tail: Pheasant tail fibers, hare's mask guard hairs, tuft of hare's mask fur, Red Fox squirrel tail, partridge hackle fibers, brown hackle fibers or none

Rib: Gold tinsel, fine oval tinsel or fine gold wire

Abdomen: Dubbed hare's ear/mask

Wingcase: Pheasant tail fibers, bronze turkey tail or wing, gray goose or duck, white tip turkey tail, peacock herl or pearlescent Flashabou

Thorax: Dubbed hare's ear/mask

Legs: Rough dubbing or picked out guard hairs

Tying Steps

1. Smash the barb, and put hook into vise by the bend. (The pictured fly was tied years ago before catch and release was widely practiced.)
2. If weight is desired, put several wraps of lead-free wire on front part of hook (thorax area). Wrap thread on shank and secure wire.
3. Select several pheasant tail fibers, and use them to make a gap length tail.
4. Tie on gold tinsel or wire.
5. Now we come to the dubbin' material. Packaged hare's ear mixes are available, but the best fur is from real hare's masks, with ears, imported from Europe. Trim all fur, except the light colored fluffy fur, off the mask and ears. Mix it in a blender, and store in a moth proof container. (If you use your partner's blender be sure to wash it out before putting it away.)
6. Use your favorite dubbing technique; I use a dubbing loop on large flies. Put a thin layer of dubbing on your thread, and compact it into a thin fuzzy noodle. Always roll the noodle in the same direction. A little dubbing wax on the thread helps. Wind dubbed body forward. It is OK if the dubbed body extends well into the thorax to provide a base for the thorax.
7. Spiral rib forward (about 5 turns), secure and trim.
8. Position thread between 2/5ths to 1/3rd shank length back from the eye. Cut a segment of pheasant tail fibers wide enough to cover thorax, and attach it on top of

body with tips pointing rearward. Have the dull side up.

9. Roll more dubbing onto your thread, and wrap a thorax that is thicker than the abdomen. Leave space at the eye to finish the head.

10. Bring wingcase forward, secure and trim excess.

11. Build a neat head, and whip finish. A drop of head cement on the thread windings will secure them against those mean fish that will hit your fly. For legs, pick out a few guard hairs from the thorax with a bodkin.

I try to keep various shades of Gold Ribbed Hare's Ear Nymphs (usually sizes 12 to 16) in the fly box and a few more at home. The main variation I use is the Flashback Nymph with its pearlescent Flashabou wingcase. It fooled a lot of Madison River, MT rainbows and browns when drifted under a strike indicator. No one should go to a lake or stream without a few Gold Ribbed Hare's Ear Nymphs.

Please Credit FFF Website or FFF Clubwire with any use of the pattern.
You can direct any questions or comments to flyofthefmonth@fedflyfishers.org