

FFF Fly of the Month

CHICKABOU SOFT HACKLE



" Standard" Chickabou Soft Hackle



" Full" Chickabou Soft Hackle

By Bob Bates

Several months ago the Oregon Council, Federation of Fly Fishers received a generous contribution of Hoffman Chickabou patches from a party on the East coast. They in turn sent boxes of patches to every council in the United States. There were no restrictions on how the patches were to be used. The Washington State Council, FFF gave four patches to each FFF fly club in the state. They can be used for fund raising, fly tying classes, etc.. Since some people haven't watched Henry Hoffman tie flies at the annual shows, I decided to dig two of his flies out of storage and write about them.

These flies were tied by Henry Hoffman at the 31st FFF Conclave and Show (1996). The one tied with all fluffy Chickabou is best for lake use. The other one tied with some fluffy Chickabou and the less fluffy fibers near the feather's tip works best in gentle streams. Henry tied the fluffy one, saved the feather tip and used it for the second fly.

Henry had a fish tank to let people see how Chickabou moves in water. "Rods" (wooden dowels) with monofilament and flies attach let us move the flies through the water in various ways. When a Chickabou Soft Hackle was pulled straight through the water there was a little fluttering movement of the fibers. However, when a strip/pause retrieve was simulated there was a tremendous movement of the barbs and barbules. On the

"strip" barbs would lay close to the body with a little fluttering and on the "pause" the fly would sink and the fibers would stand out from the body. Action like this attracts any curious fish.

Depending on the situation (and your inclinations) Chickabou Soft Hackles can be fished in lakes or streams with floating, sink-tip or full sinking lines. As always try different retrieves until you find what fish like.

Materials:

Hook: Mustad 3906B, 10-16

Weight: Small gold bead

Thread: Brown 6/0

Tail: Chickabou

Rib: Gold wire, fine

Body: Chickabou

Hackle: Chickabou

Tying Steps:

1. Smash down the barb if you wish.
2. Slip on a gold bead. If you have beads with a small hole on one side and a large one on the other thread it onto the hook so the small hole is next to the eye. If, on the other hand, you have the misfortune to own beads with a big hole all the way through, then a little pre-work is needed. Thread the bead onto the hook, place a generous drop of thick head cement on the shank behind the eye and slide bead over it. Lay hook on a metal or glass surface so the edge of the hole in the bead touches the eye and let glue dry.
3. Put hook in vise, put thread on hook and wind it back to bend of hook.
4. You can break off the tip of a Chickabou feather for the tail. Squeeze the tip and tie it on so there will be gap-width long tail. Save the butt section and use it for hackle on this or another fly.
5. Secure fine gold wire at hook's bend.
6. Pick a longer feather, squeeze all the fibers together and secure it at bend with tip forward. Wind thread forward to a point about one-third shank-length back from the eye. Wrap a soft fuzzy body forward, secure and trim excess. As you wrap the body, lay one wrap next to the other without overlapping so the body doesn't get too thick.
7. Counter wrap wire rib over body to protect the delicate fibers.
8. Pick a feather with quite a bit of Chickabou (fluff) on it and trim off a little at the base. Tie the feather in by the butt and start to wrap it. The base of most feathers is thick and

tends to twist. Place nail of the forefinger against the backside and hold it straight as you wrap. (This is a trick that Henry learned 40 plus years ago when tying dry flies with import hackles.) Keep wraps open so fibers will be able to move. Secure behind bead, trim (keep the tip) and whip finish behind the bead.

9. The tip of the feather, with little or no fluff, can be used to make the "standard" soft hackle version of the fly. You can see the difference in the pictures above.

Chickabou Soft Hackle flies really have the movement to drive fish wild. So when you start using them in some of our quality lakes be ready to be towed around in your float tube or do serious battle from you boat.

Henry suggests: Use only tail, body and rib on a size 16 fly. Don't put on hackle.

Henry took his time going back to Oregon from the Conclave. He fished 17 days using Chickabou Soft Hackle flies. On the Snake River he went after smallmouth bass with size 6 and 8 hooks. Caught 30 1st day, eight the 2nd and on a side water caught 14 fish 10- to 15-inches long. He is one guy who has his priorities straight.

Please Credit FFF Website or FFF Clubwire with any use of the pattern.

You can direct any questions or comments to flyofthemonth@fedflyfishers.org