

## **FFF Fly of the Month**

### **YAK SKWALA**



**By Bob Bates**

Spring is coming and that is the time when many of us start thinking about hatching insects and the fish that feed on them. One of the early hatches on several rivers is the Skwala stonefly, a large insect that lives in clean, well-oxygenated fast-water. It is 1-1/4 inches long including the tails and antenna; the body is 1/2-inch long.

Depending on water temperature movement can start in the last week of February, and by March the afternoon hatch is well under way. The nymphs become active when the temperature reaches the high 30s with the best starting temperature about 42 degrees F. As the nymphs crawl around, some become dislodged by the faster water and drift downstream. This is a good time to cast a Skwala nymph pattern. The hatch is usually well underway when water temperatures reach the mid to high 40s. You can get more information on the Yakima River, (Washington, USA) Skwala stoneflies at: <http://www.theeveninghatch.com/hatches.htm>

Jack Mitchell of The Evening Hatch shop in Ellensburg, WA gave a Yakima River presentation to the Inland Empire Fly Fishing Club in November 2003. Prior to the talk he tied a Skwala Nymph, one of his favorite patterns for early fishing on the Yakima. It didn't have a name so it was named on the spot - Yak Skwala.

Fishing instructions start with "dress warmly." Remember this is a pre-runoff hatch. Dead drift the nymph with a sink tip line and twitch it a little. It can also be fished under a strike indicator or large dry fly. Put about 3 feet of tippet between the strike indicator or dry fly and nymph. The fish aren't real active at these water temperatures, but there is no question about the strike.

### **Materials:**

**Hook:** Tiemco TMC 2302 size 6-8

**Bead:** Gold 3/32-inch

**Thread:** Brown 6/0

**Tail:** Olive goose biot

**Rib:** Medium gold wire

**Body:** Dubbing Kaufman's Angora goat, Olive Brown or Golden Stone

**Legs:** Round rubber brown

**Hackle:** Dyed Olive grizzly or brown dyed grizzly.

### **Tying Steps**

1. Most of us smash the barb down so we can release fish easier.
2. Tie on biots with curved side out to make the tails go out to side. The tail on a Skwala is longer than on most stoneflies, up to 1/2-inch long.
3. Tie on wire
4. Start putting dubbing on thread, but keep it very thin. Can always put more on the thread and wrap more. Build body a little thicker forward.
5. Bring Rib forward, tie off and trim.
6. Tie on legs one pair at a time. Put a little more dubbing behind, between and in front of legs. Then move thread with a little dubbing to behind legs.
7. Select a saddle hackle with lots of marabou like barbs, schallpen works great. Strip off a little of the fuzzy hackle, and tie the feather on to hook with shaft on far side of hook and behind far side legs. Bring thread between legs to in front of legs. Wrap about 2-1/2 turns of the fuzzy hackle in middle of legs and tie off in front of legs.

The Skwala hatch does not last long, so you need to check with your fly shops or local guides for information. It is usually over by the end of April, or when the runoff comes. Tie a few Yak Skwala patterns and go fishing. This pattern has so much movement in the water that it makes me think it will work at other times also.

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

You can direct any questions or comments to [flyofthemonth@fedflyfishers.org](mailto:flyofthemonth@fedflyfishers.org)