

**DOC SPRATLEY**



By Bob Bates

**Comments:**

This one is a favorite fly for a lot of anglers. Some local writers said that it is almost the National Fly for Western Canada. Indeed while fishing a Canadian lake a few years ago, one fellow from Calgary was catching more fish than the rest of us. A friend of his asked “What are you using?” His answer was clear “Doc Spratley.” It also has plenty of admirers in the northwestern part of the U.S. So it’s about time that we let the rest of you in on the secret. Most fly anglers who have used it will sing its praises anytime you ask. Closer to home my younger son frequently taps dad’s fly box for “surplus” Doc Spratleys. I finally taught him to tie them so my losses aren’t as great now. Fishing can’t be good if you don’t have them along.

*Flies of the Northwest*, 1986 ed. by the Inland Empire Fly Fishing Club has the generally accepted story on its development and naming. “Mrs. Dorothy Prankard Schrach of Mt. Vernon said her husband, the late Dick Prankard, originated the pattern about 1949. She said he called the fly ‘Doc Spratley’ because the doctor (Dr. Donald A. Spratley of Mt. Vernon) came into the store at the time he was tying it and asked Dick ‘what do you call it?’ Dick replied, ‘I think I’ll call it Doc Spratley.’” Another, more interesting, version is on the Federation of Fly fishers, Washington State Council website. <http://www.washingtoncouncilfff.org/docspratleystory.htm> The article was written by Richard Raisler, who purchased Dr. Spratley’s dental practice, and contains more fishing stories along with other tidbits.

Every year Dr. Spratley and several of his friends went fishing in British Columbia, Canada. They caught a lot of fish, and it was his success in lakes with large caddis flies that led to its widespread acceptance.

Most fly anglers I know use it with full sinking fly lines, but sink-tip and floating lines have a place in the right situations. Let the line and fly sink to near weed beds and then start a slow retrieve. If nothing happens at first, vary the retrieve and depth until you connect. You can always move to a

new spot. Only as a last resort change to a different fly. Some anglers have success by trolling (sorry mooching) it behind a boat, float tube or pontoon boat with a sinking line. The Doc Spratley pattern has been used successfully in every lake with fish.

Any successful fly pattern will see many variations, and there are many ties of this pattern. Some have so much wide tinsel on them that it is hard to see the body, and one for steelhead is on a 4/0 hook. However, according to the information I have this tie is the original and authentic pattern, which is used to catch rainbow and cutthroat trout.

### Materials list:

**Hook:** Mustad 9671 or 9672, or equivalent hook, 8-12

**Thread:** Black 3/0

**Tail:** Grizzly hackle fibers

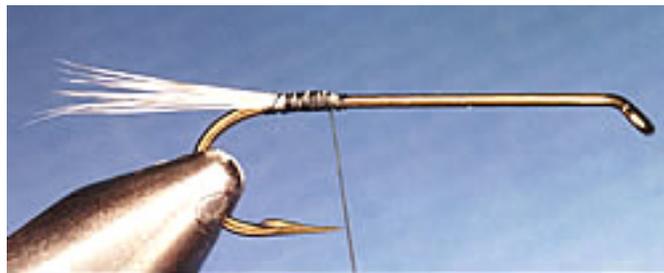
**Body:** Thin, black yarn

**Rib:** Fine oval silver tinsel

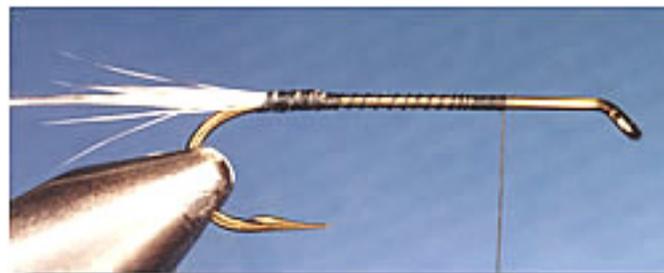
**Hackle:** Soft grizzly hackle, full collar

**Head:** Peacock herl

### Tying Steps:



1. Attach thread near bend of hook, and tie on a gap length tail of grizzly hackle fibers.



2. Tie on oval tinsel at the bend of the hook, and move thread to a point 1/4 shank length back from the eye.



3. Attach yarn at the 1/4 point and wind thread rearward over yarn to a point about two tinsel widths in front of the tail. Return thread to tie in point. Then wrap yarn forward to the tie in point, secure and trim excess. All instructions say make the body thin.



4. Start the rib forward by first taking two wraps of tinsel in the small space between tail and back of body. Then spiral tinsel (five turns) to front of body. Secure and trim excess. Most tiers simply make four or five spiral turns and omit the two starting wraps that were part of the original pattern.



5. Tie on a soft grizzly hackle with fibers almost long enough to reach the hook point, and wind it as a normal collar. Then pull fibers down and wind backward with thread so fibers point rearward. Don't tie all fibers solidly into a beard, but leave some pointing to sides.



6. Select a ringneck pheasant tail that has a good portion of reddish brown color, pull the fibers outward from the stem to even the tips, and cut off a few fibers (about a half inch along the stem) for a sparse wing. Tie the wing in over the hackle, trim butts on an angle and wind thread toward eye making a smooth ramp. Return thread to wing tie in point.



7. Take several peacock herls, and tie them by the tips. Clip excess herl, and wind thread to within one eye-width of the eye. Wrap herl forward producing a head with a diameter a little larger than the body. Secure herl and trim excess.



8. Form a thread head and whip finish. Complete the head with a drop of head cement.

**Closing comments:** Variations include orange body with brown hackle and brown body, gold tinsel with brown hackle. Orange body is for cutthroat trout. Doc Spratley is one fly that you should have in good supply. It's useful in any of our trout lakes. Bass might even chase it. Next fall try it for steelhead.

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)