

Fly of the Month

Theme and Variations on the Copper Haze

Originally Tied by Andy Carlson

Modified by Bob Prince



Everyone knows of the venerable Purple Haze. It's been a staple of most western fly boxes for many years, but have you ever fished its almost twin brother, the copper haze? If the answer is yes, then you probably know how effective this pattern can be. If you haven't, then you might want to see what this fly is all about.

Being on the water nearly every day in the summer, I get to try a lot of flies out. One day I noticed several fish coming up to "sniff" a purple haze but failing to commit. I quickly switched to a copper haze (it happened to be the first fly I saw in my box) and saw a dramatic improvement in the situation. I rowed for a few minutes with one person on purple and the other on copper and it was an easy 2-1 difference in eats towards the copper haze. I switched my other guy to the copper bug in short order and we had a great morning of dry fly fishing.

We all know that the purple haze works, and works really well. Most of the time... I noticed however, (and I think it's because so many folks are throwing the purple fly) is that there comes a time mid-summer that fish begin to shy away from it. Usually it seems, it's when the PMD's begin to wane in the middle of July. The copper haze has been the answer at times. It more closely resembles the rusty colored PMD spinner for those morning falls, and seems to be taken more readily when fish are feeling the pressure of a lot of boats and anglers.

It also does a darn good job resembling a mahogany, and brown drake in the right sizes. It can also pass for a March Brown in a pinch. Whatever it looks like, I know it works. Will it change your life? Probably not. But it will give you another arrow in your quiver on those days when you need one.

I've changed a few things from the original. I go with a moose mane tail, (I think it looks buggier) a thin thread body over using spandex like the original, and a dubbed thorax. I also switched out the calf tail for a Widow's Web post. Does it catch any more fish? I'm not sure, I just like the results better. Whip a few up and see how they work for you.

Ingredients

Hook: Any standard length dry fly hook (I like the Allen D101BL)

Thread: Danville 6/0 #47 (Tobacco Brown)

Tail: Natural Moose Mane

Body: Tying Thread

Thorax: Superfine Rusty Spinner Dubbing

Post: Any color Widows Web You Prefer

Hackle: One Grizzly and One Brown

Directions

1. Put your post on.
2. Tie the tail on. I like 4-7 pieces of moose mane but nobody's counting. Leave the butts of the mane long, up to the base of the post. This will give your fly a nice taper when you wrap the body.
3. Wrap the body from the tie in point on up to the base of the post.
4. Tie in 2 hackle feathers. One grizzly and one brown.
5. Advance your thread to the eye and add a decent amount of dubbing. I prefer a slightly bulkier thorax.
6. Wrap your dubbing from the eye back and then do a couple x wraps around the base of the post.
7. Wrap your hackle. I wrap both at the same time. Make sure you pull tight on your hackle as you do this. I think about 3-4 wraps is perfect.
8. I whip finish around the post rather than making a thread head. It looks really good and I like how easy it is.
9. Done!