

The Pheasant Tail Nymph - A Modern Variation

Submitted by Ken Dixon



The Pheasant Tail Nymph (PTN) can be fished in both still water (lakes and ponds) as well as in streams and rivers. On the stream, it may be fished just under the surface but is usually most effective when cast upstream and fished on a dead drift near the bottom. However, the fly can also be effective at mid levels in the stream. On Lakes, the PTN can be effective in the middle of the day during a Callibaetis (Mayfly) season. It would be fished using a floating line and a sunken leader, retrieving the fly slowly just below the surface in shallow areas near weed beds.

Pheasant Tail (PT) Comments and tips:

- Some PT feathers have identical fibers on both sides of the quill. But sometimes, there is a well-marked row on one side and a faintly marked row on the other – in this case use the bright, well marked fibers as these are the most durable.
- PT fibers are fragile, it is better to use your fingers to wrap rather than hackle pliers - this allows you to adjust tension appropriately on the fibers as you proceed.
- When wrapping PT, especially when not reinforced with wire, you may need to place the forefinger of the off hand on top of the fibers as you come over the top of the hook so you can release the fibers with the tying hand and reach under to re-clasp the fibers.
- To keep the fibers from spreading as you wrap them, twist the fiber bunch a bit on each wrap.

Pheasant Tail Nymph

Materials:

Hook: TMC 100 (Down Eye) Size 12 - 18

Tail: Pheasant Tail Fibers (Cock pheasant center tail)

Body: Pheasant Tail Fibers

Rib: Fine Copper Wire

Thorax: Fine Copper Wire & Peacock Herl

Wingcase: Pheasant Tail Fibers

Thread: Brown 6/0 (140 Denier)

1.



Mount the hook and tie a thread base from one eye width behind the hook eye to a point halfway between the barb and the point of the hook. Remove the tag end of the thread.

2.



Stroke the pheasant tail fibers back and select about 10 fibers. Even the tips of the fibers while they are still attached to the stem. Using your off hand, grasp the fibers by the tips, and cut them off close to the stem.

3.



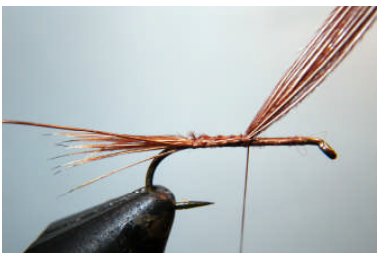
With the tips pointed to the bend of the hook, grab the butt end of the fibers with the tying hand to measure the tail length which should be $\frac{2}{3}$ to $1x$ the length of the hook shank. Grasp the fibers at the tie in point using the thumb and forefinger of the off hand and set them at the rear of the hook with the tips pointed away from the hook. Tie the fibers in place using two pinch wraps of thread. The fibers are delicate - tie the fibers firmly to keep from coming loose, but not so tight that you cut them.

4.



Tie in the copper wire at the tie in point leaving the long section hanging down (you can leave the tag end extending to about the mid-point of the shank).

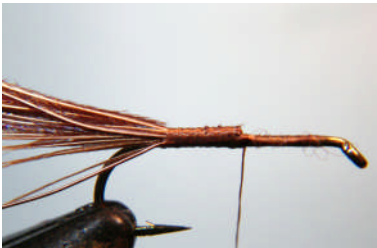
5.



Wrap thread over the fibers and tag end of the copper wire (keeping fibers on top of shank) back to the mid point of the shank.

Note: You can use the fingers of the off hand to hold the fibers on top of the shank as you tie them down.

6.



Fold the pheasant tail fibers back and wrap your thread over them (again keeping fibers on top of shank) back to the rear tie-in point. Return thread to the mid-point of hook shank.

7.



Using close wraps, wind the Pheasant Tail fibers forward to just beyond the mid-point of the hook shank and tie down securely but do NOT remove the butt end fibers.

Note: You can tie a half hitch in your thread and use your bobbin cradle if you have one on your vise to move the thread out of the way while wrapping the PT fibers and, later, the copper wire.

Note: Do NOT release the PT fibers until they are securely tied down as they will totally unwrap if freed.

ALTERNATE: At this point, if your fibers are not going to be sufficiently long to fold forward over the thorax and back again, cut off the butt ends of the tail/body fibers after securing them with a half hitch. Select a new bunch of fibers, cut off the tapered ends of the tips. Lay fibers on top of the hook, tips toward the hook eye, and tie in at the mid point of the hook. Trim tips close to thread and then proceed to the next step.

8.



Wrap the copper wire over the fiber body as a rib – 4 or 5 turns. When you reach the mid-point, move wire around the pheasant tail fibers and begin to build a small but distinct thorax between the fibers and the tie-in point at the hook eye. Securely tie off wire at the fibers and cut off excess wire.

Note: You can wrap the wire in the opposite direction to that of the fibers to increase durability of the fly.

Select two pieces of peacock herl, cut off about ¾” on the tips, and tie in tips at the PT fibers. Wrap herl around thread (reinforces herl).

9.



Using close wraps, wrap herl over thorax up to the front tie-in point. Separate herl and thread, secure herl with thread and make a half hitch.

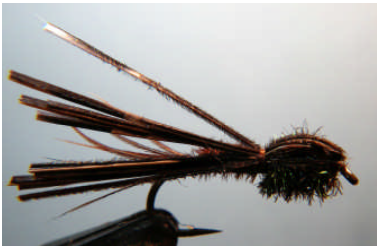
Note: Hold herl securely as it will totally unwrap if it gets away from you before you tie it down.

10.



Pull fibers over top of thorax to the front tie-in point to create a wing case and secure with a full thread wrap. Using a single wide wrap, move thread over top of fibers back to mid-point of shank.

11.



Fold fibers back over the wing case and tie them down where you left the thread.

12.



Whip finish fly in the area between the body and thorax. Cleanly trim off the butts of the PT fibers.

Species Caught: brook trout, brown trout, rainbow trout