

Dick's Conehead Pin Smelt

March 23, 2001

Maybe it doesn't look like it outdoors, but ice-out in the great Northeast is only a few weeks away. That means the smelt will be running, and the landlocked salmon will be chasing them.

Last year, I did fairly well on landlocks. This required spending quite a few hours on the water. In order to square this with my Russian wife, I decided to take one salmon for the table. It was a pretty good-sized one; almost four pounds. When I opened the fish, what I found was a lot of very small smelt; pin smelt, as they are called in these parts. Apparently, this is the dietary staple of our New Hampshire landlocks at this time of year, and I suspect they are fairly widespread throughout the region.

I caught landlocks on a variety of flies last season. Two were outstanding; my Conehead Smelt pattern, and a Maynard Marvel variation called the Pumpkin Head. One looks a lot like the natural baitfish, while the other is purely an attractor. It was the latter that fooled the large salmon. Here are the dressings and some tying instructions.

The Dressing:

Hook	4XL or 6XL streamer. Here, a Daiichi model 1750.
Threads	First, White 7/0 Uni-Cord. Then, Hot Orange 8/0 or 6/0. Finally, Gray 8/0 or 6/0.
Head	Silver or black nickel cone.
Body	Flat silver tinsel.
Layer One	Soft, fine white hair.
Layer Two	A mix of pink and lavender soft, fine hair, sparse.
Layer Three	Light gray soft, fine hair, about equal to the other two layers combined.

A word of explanation regarding the Uni-Cord thread. This a specialized thread of recent introduction. It's great for spinning hair. The reason I've chosen it here is that it lies very flat, which minimizes bulk at the point where the components are tied on, so that the cone will slide back a little ways and cover the front of the tie-off wraps. If you don't have Uni-Cord, just use the hot orange all the way through until the end.

Before putting the hook in the vise, mount the cone by inserting the hook point into the nose of the cone; then run the cone up to the eye. Put the hook in the vise, tie on with the white thread, tie in the tinsel a little ways back from the rear of the cone, and wrap a double-layer body.

Tie on the three colors of hair in layers; not too heavy on the materials. Trim neatly after each layer, and avoid excess bulk. Before wrapping the hot orange throat, apply a drop of Zap-A-Gap or similar super glue on the thread wraps. This is especially important if you're using the Uni-Cord. Form the throat, which is actually a gill effect, then tie off the orange thread.

Tie on with the gray thread at the eye, in front of the cone. Put a bit more Zap-A-Gap just inside the rear of the cone and wrap some thread against the nose of the cone, thus forcing it back and locking it in position. Tie off again and put some head cement on the finishing wraps.

Dick's Conehead Pin Smelt continued



Happy Opening Day to all! Dress warm.

For other Fly Tying Projects, please visit my website at www.dicktalleur.com. You will also find information about past and upcoming guided fishing trips, my books and instructional videotapes, recommended products, and upcoming classes and shows.

