

## The Osprey Flybox “Stan’s Pussy Willow”

The newsletter deadline was approaching and I still didn’t have anything for the February Flybox, it seemed after almost seven years of Phil and myself haranguing our members for submissions the well had finally gone dry. I needed to think of a pattern I could use. Let’s see, the Gil Rd fish out is coming up next month, hmmm ... I remembered that day at the February fish out a few years ago when **Stan Ogden** had that great afternoon, I went to my binders of newsletters and read the fish out report from the March 2000 issue, “That’s the time Stan began his clinic on cuttie fishing. Over the next 45 minutes or so he landed at least 10 fish losing 4 more, at one point getting 6 fish in 8 casts, atta boy Stanley!” I still remember the fly, basically a woolly bugger with a silver plastic chenille rib, simple but seemingly deadly.

I got on the phone to ask Peter Caverhill about the fly, he knew of it but didn’t know what Stan had called it; I needed to know what Stan’s name for it was. Next I called former member **Cliff Olson**, he had to know, he had been Stan’s fishing pal for years. Right away Cliff knew the fly, “he called it the Pussy Willow, I didn’t ask Stan how he came up with the names for some of his patterns,” he chuckled. “It’s not a pretty pattern, not nice to look at but it sure catches fish!” Through the wonders of email and fax machines, Cliff provides the following information.

*“A good friend, Jim Verret who now lives in Sechelt introduced Stan and me to this fly a few years back. While Jim lived in Richmond he was consistently up and down the Fraser after his favourite fish, the cutthroat. He in turn met someone from Abbotsford (name unknown) who was using a similar pattern. The fly here is a copy of Jim’s which is a copy of someone else’s, a mutation that works.”*

*“This is a simple tie for those of us who are fumble fingered. The tail is as long as the body if not a bit longer. Do not use a large clump; you want the tail to be an extension of the body and snake through the water on the retrieve like the leech or eel it imitates. Stan was very specific and only used 2 strands of pearl Flashabou, one piece on each side of the tail about  $\frac{3}{4}$  length. Hey, it worked!”*

*“Over the years of fishing together, Stan and I came to one conclusion, DO NOT LIMIT YOURSELF DUE TO LACK OF IMAGINATION. This fly should be tied however you like it, don’t be too concerned if it’s not “perfect”. As with all flies, mutation always happens. There is nothing to say that at certain times a peacock herl head wouldn’t add a bit of pizzazz, rather than Flashabou I will sometimes substitute four strands of black Krystal Hair in the tail and it does work, however I do tend to fall back on the pattern as shown when things are slow and it will catch fish when my version did not. Most people like the black version, however we tried maroon, green and brown as well but found the original black was by far the most productive for cutthroat. Although it is basically a sub species of the Woolly Bugger, the silver rib seems to cause much better reaction from the fish. The size of the pattern seems to make little difference to the fish, we normally used 3X and 4X hooks from size 6 to 12. A couple springs ago, we were on the Harrison and Stan was using the same pattern in a size 12-3X long and was catching fish in the 12” to 15” range while I was using a size 6-4X long and could not keep the 6 inchers away. These were cuts and not steelhead so there is no rhyme or reason to what size you use, just have more than one ready.”*

I’ve tied the fly as suggested to me by Phil Rowley. Rather than tie the hackle in by the tip at the rear and fight with it as you wrap to get the fibres to lay right, it’s easier to tie it in by the base at the front and wrap it back to the rear. You then counter wind a mono rib toward the eye over the hackle to hold it in. This not only makes the hackle easier to work with, it reinforces it as well making it more resistant to the fish’s teeth. Last thing you want is to look at your fly after one hit and find your hackle hanging off in pieces.

# TYING INSTRUCTIONS

Materials	
Hook:	Various sizes, 2-4x long
Thread:	Black
Tail:	Black marabou with one strand of pearl Flashabou per side
Rib:	Large silver plastic chenille
Counter Rib:	Fine mono tying thread
Hackle:	Black, webby saddle.

## Step 1

Tie in marabou tail at the eye of the hook to avoid the big bump you get when you tie it in near the bend. Tie in a single strand of pearl Flashabou on each side of the tail



## Step 2

Tie in the mono thread and fold back the tag end and wrap on top of it to ensure it won't pull out when you work with it. Strip some fibres off the end of the black and plastic chenille and tie them in at the tail.



## Step 3

Wrap the black chenille forward tie and tie off.



#### Step 4

Wrap the silver chenille forward so the black shows through in between. The amount of wraps used will vary depending on the size of the hook. A 3x long size 8 is shown with 3 wraps of silver chenille.



#### Step 5

Tie in a soft webby hackle at the front of the fly wet style, curving down or away from you.



#### Step 6

Grasp the end of the hackle with some pliers and wrap back toward the tail. Let the hackle hang with the weight of the hackle pliers and counter wrap the mono thread toward the eye working it carefully through the hackle. When you tie off the mono, do the usual 3-4 wraps then fold the tag back and put a few more wraps on top of the fold to make sure the slippery mono is tied in securely. Trim the mono, whip finish and cement



“When we fished rivers we tended to use ghost tips and found that a natural drift with the occasional twitch seemed to work best, especially in February when the water is clear and cold. Use your imagination though, try various retrieves or you might miss the one that works for you that day.

While I do not like bead or lead cone heads, they may be added for lake fishing as this will cause the fly to rise and fall on retrieve which will make it a little more appetizing to the fish. We tried a few with lead wrapped at the head which may have had a bit more success when after rainbows.”

“Use this in lakes in various colours as it will certainly attract rainbows and when the coho are running give it a try, you may be pleasantly surprised.”

A big thanks to Cliff for sharing with us one of Stan’s mainstay cuttie patterns, let’s hope we run in to him in the near future. Thanks also to Stan Ogden who has reached the calm of the other shore, the Ospreys are fortunate to have had him as a member, may he rest in peace.