

Osprey Flybox

“Tape Wing Caddis ” *By Peter Caverhill*

Linda and I were recently in Montana (June). In a chat with a fellow in the fly shop in Whitefish, he told me about a neat way to make realistic feather caddis wings using clear tape. I have since done a bit of research on the method and have tied a few flies using “tape wings”. Also, on trips to several trout streams this summer, these flies proved their worth by floating well, catching trout and being very durable. This is one of the simplest, easiest ways to make very durable and lifelike caddis wings. The following comments will help you get started:



Prepare the taped feathers

Get some clear hockey tape (the PVC type not your normal scotch tape which isn't water proof).

Lay out a strip of tape sticky side up (secure each end with small pieces of tape so the strip won't roll up; I find it useful to lay this out on something that you can move around as opposed to putting it directly on a table top)

Select some candidate caddis wing feathers. These can be from grouse, partridge, pheasant, hen neck – whatever coloring and speckling you feel you need for your caddis pattern. Prepare the feathers by stripping off the flue (fuzzy part).

Lay each feather, shiny side up, along the tape strip. I find it helpful to put the feather tip onto the tape (where it will adhere) then pull gently back on the feather and lay the remainder of the feather down. This tends to pull the feather fibers into a more compact package.

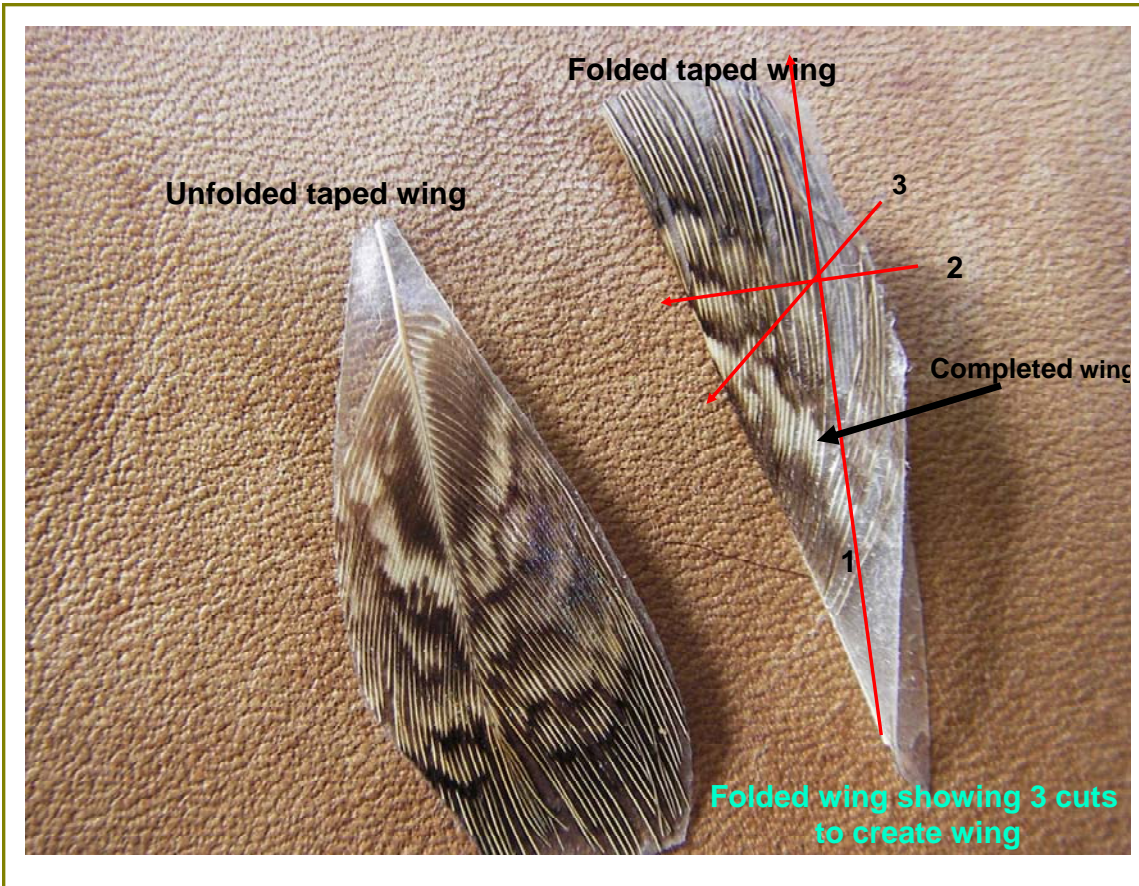
Cut each feather away from the strip so that you have a square of tape with the feather embedded. Stick these squares somewhere (cupboard edge?) in anticipation of cutting out the each feather from its tape square.

Take each tape square and cut around the feather (longer bladed scissors help here). Store the cut out “pre-wings” in a small container.

Size and cut the wing

Take a cutout feather with the feather side up. Fold the feather in half along the feather stem. Hold the folded feather tightly together with thumb and forefinger along the stem in anticipation of further cutting.

Make a longitudinal cut along the folded feather at an angle away from the stem (cut #1; makes an



elongated triangle). Now, depending on the size of the caddis, cut perpendicular to the stem (cut #2). This makes a shortened triangle (the shortness depends on the size of the fly that will be tied). Finally, cut the base of the triangle at about a 60 degree angle toward the apex of the



triangle (cut #3; this makes the heart shaped look of the caddis wing when viewed from above). Unfold to see how the wing looks Run the thread up to the bead, wrap the Fly Fiber, red side out a few turns to create the red butt, bring the thread back and make one turn over the Fly Fiber to lock it in and return the thread up to the front tapering up toward the bead .

Completing the fly (other components

Simply choose a dubbed body (color/ material of your choice) then add an under-wing of cul-de-canard (CDC). This assists floatation of the fly. Tie in the tape wing over the CDC then add a good

quality dry fly hackle (4-5 wraps) which you will trim underneath (so that it floats low on the water's surface). Note: leave about 30% of the hook shank, forward of the wing, to accommodate the hackle without crowding the head.

NOTE:

When your fly-in-progress is ready to accept the wing, it is a very easy thing to lay the folded and cut wing (like a little pup tent) onto the top of the hook just in front of the thorax.

It doesn't matter what size feather that you have taped, this feather can be easily cut to be compatible with any size fly. However, very tiny flies (#16, #18 etc) are best winged with smaller taped feathers that are less bulky.

Also, I have found that in the smaller size caddis (#12 and less) that a very good hook to use is the larger gap, shorter shank curved hook (ie. Tiemco 2457 or 2302). These tend to be a bit more skookum than the standard small dry fly hooks.

Fishing the tape wing caddis

This fly floats very well with the addition of some floatant. It can be quite easy to see on the water, depending on the color or shade of the feather that you choose to tape-up (ie light colors show up well). Sometimes the wing may delaminate a bit when several fish are caught but this can be fixed by simply squeezing the wing back into shape and position.

On a recent early-August trip to a stream near here, the realism of flies tied with the tape wing was proven beyond a doubt. I had cast line and leader onto the stream when I noticed that my leader was hovering above the water. A dragonfly had picked up the tape wing and was proceeding to carry it off.



If you have a pattern you'd like to share with club members, let me know and we'll put it in a future issue. Call me at 604-930-1112 or email me at will.wright@telus.net