

Quigley Cripple - Blue Wing Olive

Sunriver Angler's Fly Tying Corner

By: Phil Fischer



I met Bob Quigley many years ago at his shop in Johnson Park, California. He was an fly tying icon, creating many innovative patterns to fool wary trout on the difficult stretches of Hat Creek and Fall River. These large spring creeks in Northern California are bug factories, and they served as Bob's laboratory. One of the lessons I have always remembered from Bob was his attention to detail, and ensuring his patterns had an element of "life" to imitate an insect. By life, he meant something to trigger a wary trout to choose your pattern as the real thing, such as color, or shape or texture. He developed the Quigley Cripple in 1978 as one of those patterns that helped solve the challenges mayfly hatches often present to the fly fisher. Often as not, trout will take a cripple, while passing on a fully emerged adult. Trout have learned not to waste energy on food sources that are difficult to feed upon, A cripple, or emerging mayfly won't fly away when the trout tries to take it off the surface. A cripple imitation provides a key elements of life to trigger the trout's feeding by sporting a trailing shuck, just like the natural and a burst of color in the thorax to imitate the natural just beginning to emerge as an adult. The Quigley Cripple is one of the original and still one of the best patterns to imitate this stage of mayfly emergence.

Over Bob's fly tying career, he never stopped fiddling with his patterns and continued to adapt and change them using newer materials that became available. The original Quigly Cripple used wound marabou or ostrich to form the tail and abdomen. He often ribbed this material with fine wire to make it more durable and help the rear of the fly sink into the surface film. In this month's pattern, I have taken his classic Quigley Cripple pattern and gave it a couple of my own updates. I substituted antron to imitate the trailing shuck. And I used a dyed turkey biot ribbed with very fine bronze wire for the abdomen. In Bob's original pattern he tied the thorax of the insect with brighter colors to show a "burst" of color, or life, to imitate the insect emerging from the shuck. I used a newer materials by blending olive dubbing with UV Olive Dubbing to create that same burst of color.

The cool moist early winter days are prime time for Blue Wing Olive Hatches on the Fall River, Crooked River and the Metolious. Give the Quigly Cripple Blue Wing Olive a try. I think you'll like it.

Pattern Recipe:

Hook: Tiemco 100 or Daiichi 1180, size 18

Thread: Olive 6/0 – 8/0

Trailing Shuck: Dark Zelon

Abdomen: Blend of Olive Antron dubbing (75%) and Olive UV Dubbing (25%)

Rib: Fine bronze wire

Wing: Dyed dark dun Elk

Hackle: Whiting Dark Dun Dry Fly Saddle

Tying Instructions:

1. Tie on the thread at the 2/3's point of the hook (wing-set position). Tie in a sparse clump of Zelon back to the tail-set position. Trim the Zelon to a length about equal to the length of the Abdomen of the fly.
2. Tie in a biot. Tie in the bronze wire. Wind the biot forward through the wing set position and tie off. Wind the wire ribbing following each wind of the biot to create segmentation on the fly.
3. Blend the olive dubbing with the UV dubbing by felting it between your fingers repeatedly until it is fully blended. Alternatively, use a spinning blade type coffee grinder. Dub the thorax with this mixture to form a "bump" for the thorax.
4. Select a sparse clump of elk hair. Take particular care to clean out all the under-fur from the hair. Place the cleaned hair tip down in a hair stacker tool and gently tap the tips of the hair even. Remove from the stacker and tie on just in front of the bump, with the tips forming the wing, and the butts extending back and over the top of the thorax. Trim the butts to the length of the back of the thorax. The tie in wraps should extend about 1/16 inch over the elk and will form a platform for the hackle.
5. Prepare the saddle hackle by stripping about an eighth inch of the barbs off the stem at the base of the feather. Tie in on the platform of thread wraps over the elk at about a 45 degree angle on the opposite side of the hook from the tier. The shiny side of the hackle should face towards the rear of the fly and the dull side towards the front (dry fly style).

6. Wind the saddle hackle 3-4 wraps and tie off in at the head of the fly, trim the excess, whip finish and lightly glue the head.

If you have questions or would like additional information about this pattern, please don't hesitate to email me. Or if you have suggestions on future patterns to feature in this column, I welcome your input. I can be reached at Philfischer@sbcglobal.net.