

Foam Skater Salmonfly

Sunriver Angler's Fly Tying Corner

By: Phil Fischer



Salmonflies are one of the most anticipated hatches every year on the waters that contain these big bugs. We're fortunate to have a world class occurrence on our own lower Deschutes River. *Ptarmicus Californica*, better known as a Salmonfly, are one of the largest aquatic stoneflies to inhabit trout waters. Each insect makes a significant meal for hungry trout and they begin to key on the naturals very quickly once the hatch begins. This hatch occurs from mid-May to early June each year and lasts for a short period of between ten days to two weeks. The Lower Deschutes can be a busy place during the Salmonfly hatch, so come prepared.

The Nymphs live subsurface for 2-4 years growing to about 2-2 ½ inches long before crawling onshore onto stream-side rocks or bushes to hatch into an adult salmonfly. Their habitat is in fast moving riffles in rivers. The name "Salmonfly" has its roots in the color of this fly; its orange abdomen and thorax is reminiscent of the color of salmon flesh. The adult female Salmonfly features a large black egg sack on the rear of its abdomen. This feature is key to your imitations, as the females fly over the stream on sunny afternoons and dap the water depositing eggs. These big bugs fly haphazardly, and often end up in the water. It is during this time that the fly is most vulnerable to hungry trout.



The Foam Skater Salmonfly pattern is designed to allow a fly fisher to imitate key triggers for Salmonflies. The orange colored abdomen is made of craft foam. And I color the last segment with a black sharpie to imitate the egg sack on the female. I also color the segments with a brown sharpie to add some variation in the otherwise plain foam color. The wing is built in three layers, with flash, CDC and elk mane. It is a very realistic simulation of the natural insect. On the thorax I have added rubber legs for life and movement. Lastly, I use a very bushy hackle. This last piece is important, as it enables this fly to be skated and flipped to imitate the movements of the female Salmonfly returning to the river to lay eggs. The combination of materials enables the fly to float extremely well, even in rough and fast riffles.

To fish this pattern, cast tightly to the bank and immediately when the fly hits the water, perform a subtle air mend to flip and skip the fly before it settles into its drift. Adult salmonflies display lots of movement on the water during egg laying flights. So, don't hesitate to flip and skip and skate the fly. This fly is designed with the big bushy hackle to facilitate moving the fly on the water. That movement often is the difference between a take and a refusal.

Give this pattern a try during the upcoming Salmonfly hatch on the Lower Deschutes. It is one of the most exciting times of the year.

Foam Skater Salmonfly Materials List:

Hook: Firehole 718, Size 4-8

Thread: 210 Denier Brown for the Abdomen and
210 Denier Fire Orange for the Thorax and Head

Abdomen: Orange 2mm Craft Foam

Flash: Olive Krystal Flash

Under Wing: Trout Hunter CDC in Dark Pardo

Over Wing: Elk Mane

Legs: Medium Brown Round Rubber Legs

Thorax Dubbing: Spirit River Brite Blend Polar Orange

Hackle: Whiting Cree Cape (or substitute Dark Ginger to Dun)

Abdomen Color: Black Sharpie for Egg Sack and Brown Sharpie for Abdomen

Tying instructions and steps are being published in video form, and can be found on the Sunriver Anglers Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/SunriverAnglers/>, or at the following YouTube URL: <https://youtu.be/TNlrqWJHeks>

Learn to tie this fly pattern and fish it in during the Salmonfly hatch on the Deschutes. If you have questions or would like additional information about the Foam Skater Salmonfly 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.