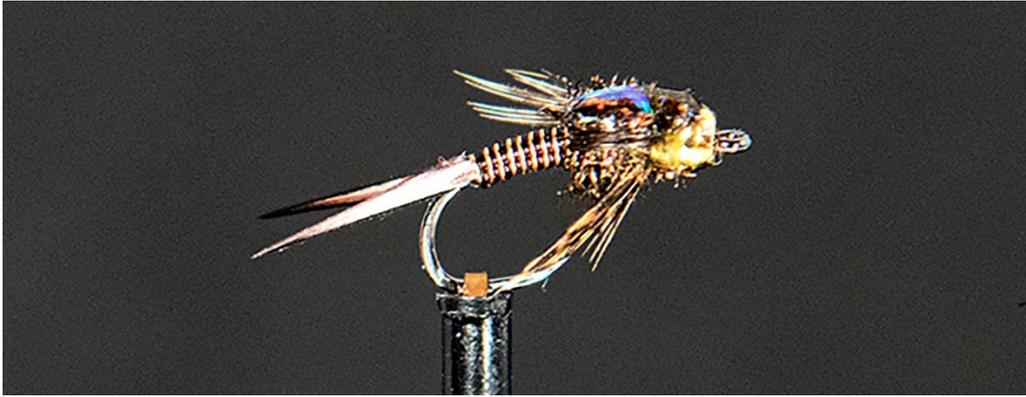


Two-tone Flashback Copper John

Sunriver Angler's Fly Tying Corner

By: Phil Fischer



Some years ago, I was fishing a small impoundment on the slopes of Mt. Lassen in Northern California when I had the absent-minded luck to tie on a Copper John fly pattern. This fly was a staple for rivers at the time, but I had never heard of it being fished in lakes and reservoirs. Much to my surprise, the pattern was very successful, and I started using it on my forays into various lakes in Oregon and California. On East Lake, the Red Copper John is a standard for me fishing in the very early season just after ice-out. I'm not entirely sure whether it imitates chironomids at this chilly time of year, or small mayflies that exist in the lake. But the trout tell me it is a go-to pattern. Over time I have experimented with various colors, and the one I have settled upon as my most productive for lakes is the subject of this article.

The original Copper John pattern was developed by John Barr in the mid-1990's. It quickly became a very popular pattern, due to the design and sink rate that drops this fly in the zone quickly. It has since been adopted as a go-to pattern that is used worldwide. The original fly was tied with copper wire in the abdomen. Subsequent versions have used red wire, chartreuse, blue, purple, etc. My version used two colors of wire, copper and bronze, to create a two-tone ribbing effect, and I have had excellent success with this pattern in both streams and still waters. It is an excellent imitation for non-descript mayfly nymphs in rivers and is also a perfect imitation for *Callibaetis* mayfly nymphs that are so important in our local Central Oregon still waters. The Two-tone Copper John pattern is also popular in olive and red, purple and silver, blue and red, and any other color combination you can dream up. I used a wider flash on the wing case than the original was tied with, hence the nickname Flashback Copper John.

I fish it both on an intermediate sink line stripped back in short choppy strips, or I will hang it under a strike indicator, often moving the fly with short pulls to pop the indicator underwater and allow it to resurface. I often fish this fly as the dropper in tandem with a balanced leech. This pair of flies was especially effective as fish congregated in the deep channels on Crane Prairie during the heat of summer. For still waters I generally use brass beads, as the heavier tungsten beads sink too fast to be realistic. In rivers, I often use the Copper John as the top fly, both with brass or tungsten beads depending on flow rate and depth, and will attach a lightly weight nymph, such as a Serendipity as the dropper. I have even used both Red and Chartreuse Copper Johns to catch Steelhead in the Trinity and Lower Deschutes rivers. Give this pattern a try in your own favorite color combination this upcoming season

Two-toned Flashback Copper John Materials List:

Hook: 718, size 14-18

Bead: Gold or Copper Bead to match hook size (7/64" for a size 14)

Thread: Ultra 140 Denier, olive

Tail: Black or brown goose biots

Abdomen: Copper and Bronze wire, Size fine or medium

Thorax: Peacock Tail Barbs

Legs: Whiting Brahma Hen Saddle in Brown or Mottled Grey

Wing Case: Shiny bronze tailfeather off a wild turkey

Flash: Mirage Tinsel in Medium or Large, Opal

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/0sTZoa3OmM4>. Experiment with this pattern on our local lakes and rivers. If you have questions or would like additional information about the Two-Tone Flashback Copper John pattern, please do not 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.