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The Pass Lake Special

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As I understand the story, the Pass Lake was invented by a Lutheran minister named Stubenvoll from Clintonville, WI in the 1930s. Originally it was tied with a mallard flank feather tail, black chenille body, brown hackle and white calf tail wing. I've seen it tied as a wet fly or as a dry fly.

With that said, folks tie it in all sorts of ways. Different materials, colors and hooks in sizes from 8 to 16 are common. At the time I tied my first one, I copied a very beat up fly that I found when putting canoes away at the end of the day. I used the materials I had, trying to copy what I thought the fly should look like if it hadn't spent the day being ground into the canoe floor under someone's foot. It worked! So, you can use almost whatever you have to tie this fly.

This was a great fly for beginners. If the presentation was good, you caught fish. The fly was easy to cast and work. It was consistently a good choice for anyone from a first timer to someone I would consider an expert on the upper river. Of course, this was in the 1970s and guides often had two people in a 21-foot square stern canoe with a live well. At mealtime, you were expected to stop at a picnic area to make lunch while customers enjoyed beverages, so a productive, easy to fish fly was a real plus for a guide.

This Pass Lake Special recipe was passed to me from my Dad.

Pass Lake Special Recipe

1. *Hook: Mustad S82-3906B – size 6 to 16.*
2. *Thread: Black or red 8/0 (70 denier). Start with 10 – 12 wraps behind the hook eye.*
3. *Tail: Mallard flank feather. Take 10 – 12 fibers and roughly align the tips. Tie them in a couple of hook eyes length behind the eye and wrap over them back to the hook bend. They should extend about half the length of the hook shank beyond the bend.*
4. *Body: Black chenille (size depending on the hook size). Tie the chenille in at the base of the tail and return the thread to behind the eye. Wrap the chenille forward and anchor it with a couple of thread wraps.*
5. *Hackle: Coachman brown hen hackle. Tie the hackle in and make a few wraps to form a collar or a throat (whichever you prefer). You may need to pull the hackle back when you secure the collar with 2 or 3 additional thread wraps.*
6. *Wing: White calf tail. Tie in the calf tail to form the wing. The wing should extend a little past the bend of the hook. Tie down the butt ends on top of the hook shank, trim the ends, and wrap to conceal the ends and form the head. Calf tail is very slick, so you'll need to bind it down well.*
7. *Head: Bone Dry Fly Tie UV Cure resin.*