

August 2024

Black Ghost Streamer

Paul Gausman, Somerset, WI



The Black Ghost Streamer was originated by Herbert L. Welch of Mooselookmeguntic Maine in 1927. It was a very productive fly that gained acceptance by anglers across the US and is a favorite of mine for the Brule River. I have many fond memories fishing feather-wing streamers on the small river sections between the upper “lakes”, on canoe trips from Winneboujou to the “cabin”, and on floats through the meadows. All are good water for swimming streamers around logs, log jams, tag alders and rocks. A favorite thing for me back in the day was to wet wade on a hot summer day around the cabin with one fly, and usually it was the Black Ghost. Browns eat this fly! A good set up was an 8½-foot to 9-foot fly rod and a weight forward floating line with a 7- to 9-foot leader.

I like to weight the fly and I like the feather wing to extend behind the bend of the hook about 1¼ to to 1½ inches for a good swimming fly. Herbert Welch dressed his wing like this. I would rather deal with the occasional fouling of the feather wing to get a better swimming fly.

Black Ghost Streamer Recipe

1. *Hook: Tiemco TMC 300 size 4 – 6 with barb pinched.*
2. *Thread: Black Flymaster Plus 140 denier.*
3. *Weight: I usually weight the fly with medium lead wire (or non-toxic substitute). Start the thread about 1/4 inch behind the hook eye and wrap a thread base to just before the hook point. Next, wrap about 1/2 inch of the lead wire to the middle of the hook. Make tapered thread dams at each end of the lead wire. Coat with head cement and over wrap the lead wire with the thread. Finish with the thread just before the hook point.*
4. *Tail: Webby yellow hackle fibers. Tie a small bunch ~3/4 inch long on top of the shank with a couple thread wraps. Trim the butt ends at an angle so as not to create a bump when they're covered.*
5. *Rib: Medium flat silver tinsel. Cut a taper in the end of a 4- or 5-inch piece and secure at an angle. The body will be ribbed later.*
6. *Body: Return the thread to about 3/16 of an inch from the hook eye. Attach about 12 inches of black floss. Wrap the floss to the tail and back to the eye and tie off.*
7. *Rib: Make uniform spaced wraps with the tinsel to the thread position and tie off. See photo.*
8. *Throat: Webby yellow saddle hackle feather with fibers that are ~1 inch long. Prepare the feather by removing the fluff off the stem at the base. Then attach the feather by the stem. Make the 4 or 5 wraps toward the hook eye while folding the fibers rearward on each wrap and tie off. Cut off the remaining feather. Wet your fingers and divide the hackle fibers evenly to each side stroking downward. Fold a piece of fly tying foam over the wet fibers with the fibers angled towards the hook point. Put a clip over the foam to hold the hackle in*

- place for 5 – 10 minutes. Check out Barry Ord Clarke's YouTube video on tying a Black Ghost with this technique (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KDjvjUrr6RY>).*
- 9. Wing: White saddle hackles. I prep 2 matching pairs of feathers that are ~3 inches long for this size fly. I glue each pair together with as little glue as possible at the stems. Then cut the stems short so that they get covered by the thread without needing to be trimmed. I put the pairs together on top of the hook shank and tie in.*
 - 10. Cheeks (optional): Jungle cock eyes. Add matching jungle cock to each side at a slight up upward angle. Form head, whip finish, and cement the head.*