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Spectral Spider

Larry Barnhart, BRSC member, Brule, WI



The Spectral Spider was originated by Walt Johnson from the Pacific Northwest in the early 1950s. Walt was a pioneer in the use of synthetic materials in fly tying. I've had success with this fly on steelhead and lake run browns, and I also caught my first Atlantic salmon at the St. Mary's rapids on it.

Here is a quote from Trey Combs' book, *Steelhead Fly Fishing*. "What, exactly such a spider represents is known with certainty only to trout. But to my eye, the fine barring of duck flank suggests the scale highlights of a minnow.

Walt Johnson's Spectral Spider, a steelhead and sea run cutthroat fly of considerable renown, simulates a small fish by means of his clever use of mallard flank and spectral stacking of Antron fibers."

Spectral Spider Recipe

1. *Hook: Daiichi Alec Jackson 2055. Size 5 or 7 (this is a gold-colored hook).*
2. *Thread: Black 8/0. Secure the thread just past the eye.*
3. *Tail: Yellow Antron fibers. Tie a small bunch on top of the hook shank and extend it past the bend of the hook about one half the width of the hook gap. Stop the thread wraps slightly ahead of the hook point.*
4. *Body: Flat silver tinsel with a rib of extra small oval tinsel. Tie in the flat silver tinsel and silver rib on the far side of the hook. Wrap the thread forward, stopping at the eye. Wrap the silver tinsel forward and tie off. Wrap the silver rib forward making 5 even turns and tie off.*
5. *Wing: Cerise, orange, green, and blue Antron. VERY small bunches are layered sequentially from bottom to top. Lay down a sparse section of cerise Antron first, stopping at the hook bend. Follow this with the orange, green, and lastly the blue Antron bunches.*
6. *Lateral line: Cream badger hackle. Set a small feather lengthwise down the hook shank on each side of the hook. These should extend to the hook bend. Try to maintain a small taper to your tie in at the head.*
7. *Cheeks: Asian Kingfisher back feathers. Tie a small blue feather in on each side just behind the head. Feathers are available from FeathersMC (<https://feathersmc.com/product/asian-kingfisher/>).*
8. *Hackle: Drake mallard flank feather. The feather should have fibers long enough to extend past the tail as seen in the photo. Hold the feather by the stem with concave side up and strip off the fibers on the left side and the fluff off both sides (If you're left-handed strip off the right side). Tie it in by the tip and make 3 even wraps, holding the feather so it splays outward as you wrap (This will help it hold its shape as it swims). Trim the excess stem and whip-finish the head. Coat with head cement.*

Note by Dean Wellman

Thanks Larry! This is a low, clear water, swing fly that is tied SPARSELY. Larry emphasized that the head is kept small to accept a Turle knot (https://www.netknots.com/fishing_knots/turle-knot). You can color white Antron with permanent markers. I have a set of Master's Touch permanent markers that I use to color material. I also substituted a small neck feather from a silver pheasant colored blue for the cheek. Larry suggests purchasing the blue Antron from the Caddis Fly Shop (<https://www.caddisflyshop.com/>). It's sold under the McFlylon brand.