

## Grouse and Herl



The grouse in this wet fly is the red grouse, found in Europe, Alaska (where it's called the willow ptarmigan), and on the label of The Famous Grouse scotch whisky. The feathers are available either as a whole skin (which costs about the same as a partridge skin) or as a pair of wings, which cost around \$10. (Badger Creek carries them.)

The fly is a great imitation of a little brown stone fly, and is never off my leader from late February through the end of March. Tied a size larger, it's also an effective *Isonychia* nymph.

Hook	Mustad R50 or equivalent, size 14
Thread	8/0 rusty brown, or black
Tag	Fine gold tinsel
Rib	Fine gold wire
Body	Peacock Herl
Hackle	Upper covert feather from a red grouse

Start the thread in the middle of the shank, and wrap back so that it hangs down mid-way between the barb and the hook point. This where the body will end. Tie in the tinsel with wraps going forward. If you're using mylar tinsel, be sure to tie it in with the gold side down. Take three or four wraps of the tinsel back to the bend of the hook, and then forward again to the tie-in point. Tie down.

Tie in a piece of wire so that main piece of wire is extending beyond the bend of the hook, and advance the thread to a point an eye's width behind the eye.

Prepare a grouse covert feather to look like a stick figure, as shown here:



The "arms" should be at least half the length of the whole hook and less than one and a half the length. There should be about ten or so barbs in each arm. Tie in by the "head" so that the feather cups up over the eye of the hook. Leave a short "neck" so that you can make the first wrap cleanly.

Tie in three or four pieces of peacock herl by the tips (leave an inch or two of waste ends to be snipped off later.) Tie the herl down all the way back to the original tie in point between the point and the barb. (Snip off waste ends near the front.) Leave the thread where it is. Grab the ends of the herl in a hackle pliers and twist into a rope. Wind the herl forward, pushing the thread forward as you do. (This keeps the herl together.) Tie down when you reach the hackle and snip off the excess. Counter-rib with the wire, "worrying" off the excess.

Wrap the hackle, stroking back the barbs as you do so. It doesn't need to be perfect. Tie down. Add extra wraps to form a head, pushing back any stray barbs as you do so. Whip finish, add head cement and you're done!