

Tying Bench – Scandinavia’s Magnus Fly

Tied by Toni Fernstrom



MAGNUS – a “traditional” Scandinavian sea trout fly

The fly is kind of generic (like many good flies) and you might already have seen something similar but under a different name. Like most “old” flies it was first tied with materials that happened to be readily available to the originator, in this case the Danish fly angler **Magnus** Ting Mortensen. Keep in mind this was way before the online era; fly shops were far between and tying supplies were scarce. Being a hunter Magnus had skins from Hare already and a neighbor was raising chickens and had a beautiful Plymouth Rock rooster. Over the years however, the pattern has “evolved” and today you can find versions tied with both synthetics and flash.

Anyway, it is still considered a Scandinavian sea trout “Classic”, but I

wouldn’t be surprised if our local redfish and speckled trout would take a liking to it as well – it would be interesting to try and find out. So here goes:

Materials

- Hook: traditionally #2-#8 long shank (I would assume that #1-#4 would be more appropriate here...)
Thread: red 3/0 for the head and for tying in the bead chain eyes. Tan, grey or black 6/0 for remainder.
Eyes: bead chain, medium or small
Tail: two splayed tips from grizzly hackle feathers. Length about equal to the hook shank.
Ribbing: small/medium oval silver tinsel (or wire).
Body: Hare’s mask, which is dubbing from the face of the European hare. However, any synthetic or natural dubbing in a tan/grey/brown hue will do.
Body hackle: grizzly rooster hackle. “Woolly Bugger” type saddle hackle is ideal.
Front hackle: webby grizzly hackle, hen or rooster.
Cement/Glue: Zap a Gap and Hard as Hull or Sally Hansen’s Hard as Nail.

Tying Sequence

1. Attach a size #2-6 hook in the vise. A hook with a longer shank, say 2XL, is preferable. The flies in the accompanying photos are all tied on Mustad 3407, which is a little on the short side, but was all that I had available.
2. Attach red 3/0 thread behind the eye and cover to about 1/6”. Tie in small or medium sized bead chain (depending on hook size) as added weight and eyes approx. 1/8” behind the hook eye. Originally the eyes were tied in under the hook shank – it’s a matter of choice, especially since it’s a “fully symmetrical fly.” Tie off, whip finish and add a small drop of Zap-a-Gap to secure the eyes.
3. Attach 6/0 thread in preferred color behind the bead chain eyes and cover hook shank to a point slightly beyond the barb.

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Tying Bench continued

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4. For the tail, tie in two grizzly hackle tips, fairly narrow, the length of about the hook shank. Tie them in splayed, i.e. with curvature of the feathers facing away from each other.
5. Tie in a 4" length of oval silver tinsel, at the very same point as the tail on the back of the hook shank (silver wire works as well in case you don't have any oval tinsel).
6. Take the thread forward in open spirals to about 1/16" behind the bead chain. Dub hare's mask (or suitable substitute) onto the thread. Create a tapered and fairly "full" body by winding the dubbed thread all the way to the tail and then back to the starting point. We're later going to rough up and fluff the dubbed body by using Velcro or a stiff small brush, hence the two layers of dubbing.
7. For body hackle, tie in a suitable grizzly hackle feather by the butt right where the body ends behind the bead chain. The length of the hackle fibers can be anywhere from 2/3 to a full hook gap. A saddle hackle with fibers that get gradually shorter as they get closer to the tip of the feather is ideal. This creates a nice tapered effect (nice for the tyer, fish probably don't care).
8. Spiral the body hackle clockwise in open turns towards the tail. I prefer using hackle pliers, unless I'm winding a long saddle hackle which you can grab with your fingers. When you reach the very end of the body, while holding the tip of the hackle feather with your left hand (assuming you're right handed), grab the oval tinsel between the thumb and index finger of your right hand, bring it under the hook and catch the tip of the hackle feather with the tinsel on the underside of the hook exactly where the dubbed body ends. With the hackle feather caught between the tinsel and the body/hook shank, you can now let go of the hackle feather as long as you make sure to keep the tinsel taut. Continue to wind the tinsel through the body hackle in an open spiral (again clockwise) all the way up to where the body begins. Try using a "weaving motion" to avoid trapping hackle fibers. Secure the tinsel with the tying thread. Counter wrapping the tinsel through the body hackle is an old technique that really locks in the hackle and results in a very robust fly. You can now snip off the tip of the body hackle under the tail close to the first turn of tinsel. But be careful, it's easy to overdo and there's no going back...
9. Tie in the shoulder hackle and wind 2-3 turns. Tie off and whip-finish. I prefer a soft hackle, like hen, with fibers slightly longer than the front of the body hackle. However, the shoulder hackle can be omitted altogether in case you prefer a "leaner" fly.



Magnus variations

For the record, I do believe a sparse tie is typically a better "fish fly" but for some unknown reason I have a tendency to overdress my flies - maybe they just look better in the vise to my eyes...

10. Now is the time to pick up your little brush or Velcro tool and roughen up the body. The picked out dubbing really adds to the "fishiness" and "bugginess" of the fly and since the body hackle is locked in by the tinsel wraps, the body can sustain some real "punishment" without falling apart. Still, some caution is always recommended.

11. Add some head cement to the head and, voilà, you have just completed the "Magnus" fly.

If you would like to know more about this specific fly pattern and/or about fly fishing and fly tying in Scandinavia, I can recommend the Global Flyfisher website (which is available in the English language). It covers fly fishing in general all over the world but does have a lot of Scandinavian input and influence. Here's the url: <http://globalflyfisher.com/>