

“Fall Steelhead and the Winter Wren” by Jason Akl

As the fall season comes to an end most fly anglers winterizing their gear and pack it away in place for an ice fishing rod and 5 gallon pail. Seasoned fly anglers know that with the heavy snow an ice of late winter comes one of the unique chances to catch a true trophy trout!

The fall/ winter steelhead is a breathtaking trout specimen that exhibits unchallenged fighting ability and picturesque beauty. These trout are hardly ever heavily pressured simply due to the poor weather conditions associated with this time of year making them more interested in what you have to offer.

Timing for the fall Steelhead run will vary from year to year and it is very dependant on that the current water conditions are but, in most cases these trophy fish will start showing themselves just after the King Salmon run and deep into the heart of winter.

To catch these silver beauties nymphs are the way to go. Fall steelheads are dissimilar than their spring counterparts in that they do not violently chase down fast retrieved flies. Fall steelheads are opportunistic feeders that sit tight to cover, or settled deep in runs waiting for prey to float down stream to them. With that theory in mind, anglers can actively target fall steelhead by dead-drifting nymph patterns or egg flies.

Cased caddis nymphs in the 10 to 14 size range and dark colored mayfly nymphs in sizes 8 to 14 will give you the best shot during this time of the season. One pattern in particular that has that been extremely effective in the upper Midwest is the Winter Wren. This fly is a relatively easy tie but incorporates a lot of the all time greats in steelhead materials. First and foremost is the classic bead head. Beads need to be bright and shiny to get the fish's attention but at the same time need to be heavy enough to get down deep in fast moving pools. The silver nymph head tungsten 1/8 (3.2 mm) bead is ideal for this fly pattern. While flies tied with copper and gold beads have also caught good numbers of fish. Second is the iridescent body. Peacock herl is just one of those special materials that big trout just can't seem to resist. It seems to come to life in the water, undulating as it drifts downstream. So instead of wasting time sitting on the ice this year tie a few of these simple flies and test out your favorite waters. You just never know when that trophy is going to bite.

Tight lines and smooth threads.

Jason Akl

Materials Used in the Winter Wren

Hook:	Daiichi Curved Shank Size 10
Thread:	Black Uni-thread Size 8/0
Head:	Silver Nymph-Head Tungsten 1/8 (3.2 mm) Bead
Body:	Peacock Herl
Shellback:	Pheasant Tail Fibers
Thorax:	Grizzly Hackle Wrapped on a Pheasant Tail Fiber Post
Horns:	Wood Duck Feather Barbs
Tag:	Yellow Stretch Floss
Collar:	Black Ostrich Herl
Weight:	Lead Free Weight

Step-by-Step Tying Instructions

Step 1:

To start this fly place the bead onto the hook shank small bore first and place the hook into you're vice securely. Attach the lead free weight and place a few turns (approx 7-9) onto the hook shank and then slide it up into the back of the bead.



Step 2:

Attach the thread onto the hook shank and tie in a small strip of yellow floss. Wrap the floss down the hook shank and back up creating a small smooth yellow butt for the fly.



Step 3:

Tie in 5 to 7 strands of peacock fibers extending off the rear of the fly and tie in 3 strands of peacock herl in front of the pheasant fibers. Twist the peacock herls into a rope and take two turns around the hook shank. Pull the pheasant fibers over the herls and tie down.



Step 4:

Pull the pheasant fibers towards the back of the fly again but this time; make three wraps of the peacock herl rope around the hook shank. Pull the pheasant fibers forward and tie them off in front of the herls.



Step 5:

Repeat this process again but this time take 4 wraps of the peacock herl rope around the hook before pulling the pheasant fibers forward.



Step 6:

At the tie down point for the herl, wrap down fine grizzly hackle and then wrap the remaining herl rope forward up the fly until you reach the back of the bead.



Step 7:

Wrap the grizzly hackle around the peacock herl as if you were wrapping a post on a parachute dry fly. After the post is wrapped pull it forward over the peacock herl and tie off behind the bead.



Step 8:

Strip two barbs from a wood duck feather and tie them down extending over the rear of the fly.



Step 9:

Tie in one ostrich herl and wrap a small collar behind the bead. Whip finish and cement the thread.

