



Medium size natural grey heron feather. This is a feather from an ordinary package bought cheaply – and legally – in a local tackle shop.



The Cheapskate Heron

The Cheapskate Heron - a poor man's Spey fly
Martin Joergensen's entry in
The 1997 Illustrated Pattern Swap
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Cheapskate Herons tied on inexpensive Sprite hooks



The Cheapskate Heron

The Cheapskate Heron is a poor man's Spey fly. Spey flies are characterized by their heron hackle. Now, where I live – in Denmark – heron is protected, but widely available and legal too. In many other places, mainly the U.S.A, heron is far more strictly protected and mostly unavailable as a fly tying material. If you find some feathers in the shops they are expensive at best and illegal at worst. If you find feathers in nature, I would generally recommend leaving them there, but I will admit that I would also be tempted.

If a heron feather – by chance of course – should dump into your lap, or if you spent the money on a bagfull (half a dozen feathers, of them two useful ones...) you probably want to be very economical with it. Spey fly patterns usually prescribe a whole heron feather wound as a body hackle. The long hackle is the hallmark of that type of fly. Which means one good feather equals one fly. That was the end of that feather.

Lady Caroline



Lady Caroline is not a typical fly for the cheapskate, but indeed a very good, classic fishing fly

Hook: Partridge Bartleet Supreme size 2	Body hackle: Natural grey heron
Thread: Black	Body: Olive and brown wool 2:1
Tag: Thin gold oval tinsel	Throat hackle: Golden pheasant red body feather
Tail: Golden pheasant red	Wings: Bronze mallard
Rib: Thin oval and flat golden tinsel	Head: Black

I came upon an idea. Actually I combined two incidents into one idea. First of all I was going through my heron feathers (yes, I have more than one) and found some butts that I had saved after having tied whole body hackles. I wanted to use these feathers, which still had a lot of useful and long barbs, but unfortunately a very thick stem. Second I saw Poul Jorgensens video on tying salmon flies for fishing and read his new Danish book on salmon flies. Here Poul describes the wishbone method of tying in throat hackles, a method that he has been using for a while. I combined those two things into a kind of wishbone heron throat hackle. By tying in two or three small sections of stem with barbs under the hook after finishing the body of the fly, I got an effect that was almost Speyish – although not as good as a real body hackle. But much cheaper..

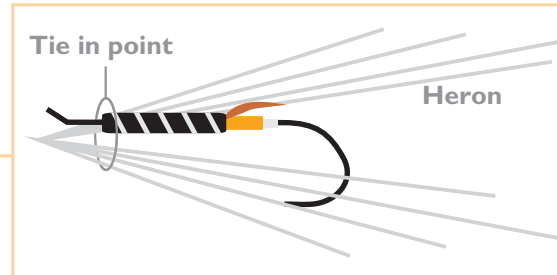
Materials:

Hook: Inexpensive salmon hook size 4-2/0
 Thread: Black
 Tag: Flat mylar silver tinsel, small
 Butt: Orange rayon floss
 Tail: Red golden pheasant body feather
 Rib: Embossed silver tinsel, medium
 Body: Black wool dubbing or yarn
 Hackle: Natural grey heron, sparse and guinea fowl
 Wind: Bronze mallard

Tying instructions:

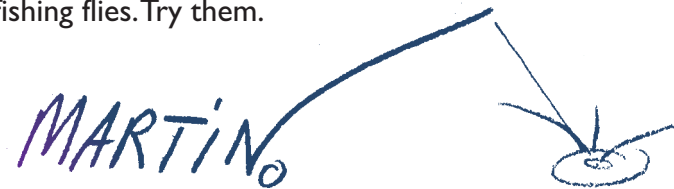
- 1) Start the thread where the front end of the floss tag will be.
- 2) Wind the thread in smooth touching turns to above the tip of the hook
- 3) Tie in the flat tinsel and wind four touching turns to the rear and four back again.

- 4) Tie off the tinsel and cut surplus
- 5) Wind the thread forwards in close, smooth turns to its starting point
- 6) Tie in the orange floss
- 7) Wind the floss to the rear to touch the tag and back again in smooth touching turns
- 8) Tie down the floss and cut surplus
- 9) Tie in a small red G.P. body feather as tail
- 10) Tie in the flat tinsel ribbing
- 11) Dub the body to a slim, tapered shape with black wool or yarn
- 12) Wind the ribbing forwards in 5 open turns
- 13) Tie down the ribbing and cut surplus
- 14) Prepare two or three short sections of heron as shown on the picture
- 15) Tie in the sections under the hook shank just in front of the body. The hackle should reach approx. a shank length behind the hook. Trim off stem pieces



- 16) Prepare a section of a medium size guinea fowl feather in the same way
- 17) Tie in the guinea fowl as a throat hackle reaching mid shank. Trim off stem
- 18) Prepare two sections of bronze mallard for wings
- 19) Set the mallard back to back on each side of the shank just in front of the body
- 20) catch with a loose loop, pinch and draw tight
- 21) Cut the butts
- 22) Form a smooth tapered head
- 23) Whip finish and cut thread
- 24) Varnish

Don't think that heron is just for filthy rich criminals. Spey flies are both beautiful and good fishing flies. Try them.



The Cheapskate Green Butt

A combo of the cheapskate fly idea and a Green Butt.
 Hook: Sprite, normal size 2
 Thread: Black
 Tag: Silver tinsel
 Butt: Green floss
 Rib: Thin oval Golden tinsel



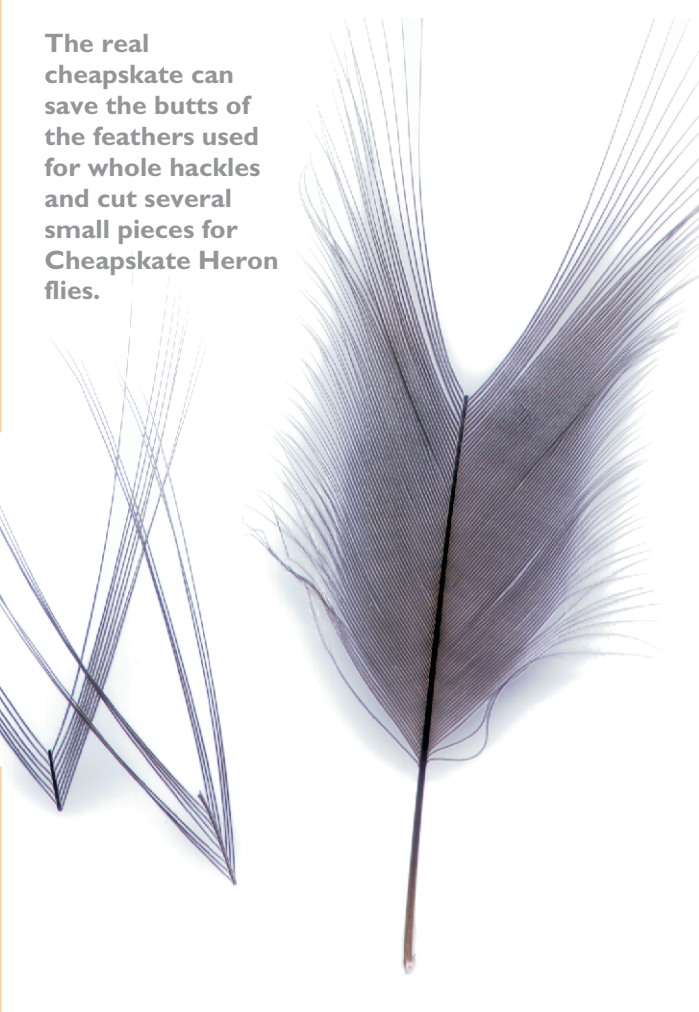
Body: Black floss
 Wings: Golden pheasant tail
 Head: Black

The key to successful feather wings is to remember: left side feather goes

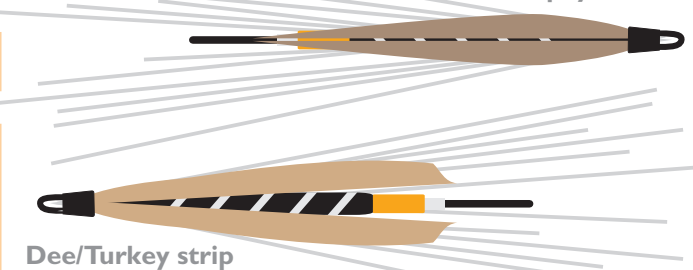


on as right side wing and opposite. Massage the strips to the right curve before tying in with a pinch grip and a loose thread loop.

The real cheapskate can save the butts of the feathers used for whole hackles and cut several small pieces for Cheapskate Heron flies.



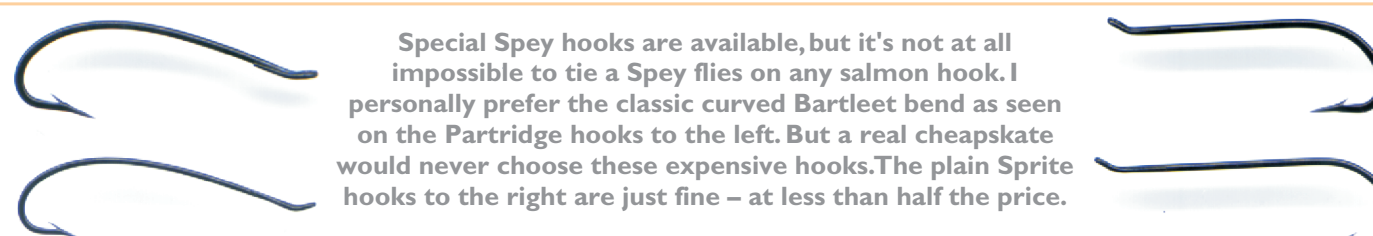
Spey/Mallard



Spey and Dee style

The tying style Spey originates in the north eastern corner of Scotland by the rivers Dee and Spey. These flies are probably some of the oldest of the classical salmon flies. Their obvious character comes mainly from two factors:

- 1) the low and often slim construction often topped by a mallard, turkey or pheasant feather wing
 - 2) the long and very mobile heron hackle
- These two traits will immediately reveal a fly as a Spey or Dee fly.



Special Spey hooks are available, but it's not at all impossible to tie a Spey flies on any salmon hook. I personally prefer the classic curved Bartleet bend as seen on the Partridge hooks to the left. But a real cheapskate would never choose these expensive hooks. The plain Sprite hooks to the right are just fine – at less than half the price.