

Tying the Pink Squirrel



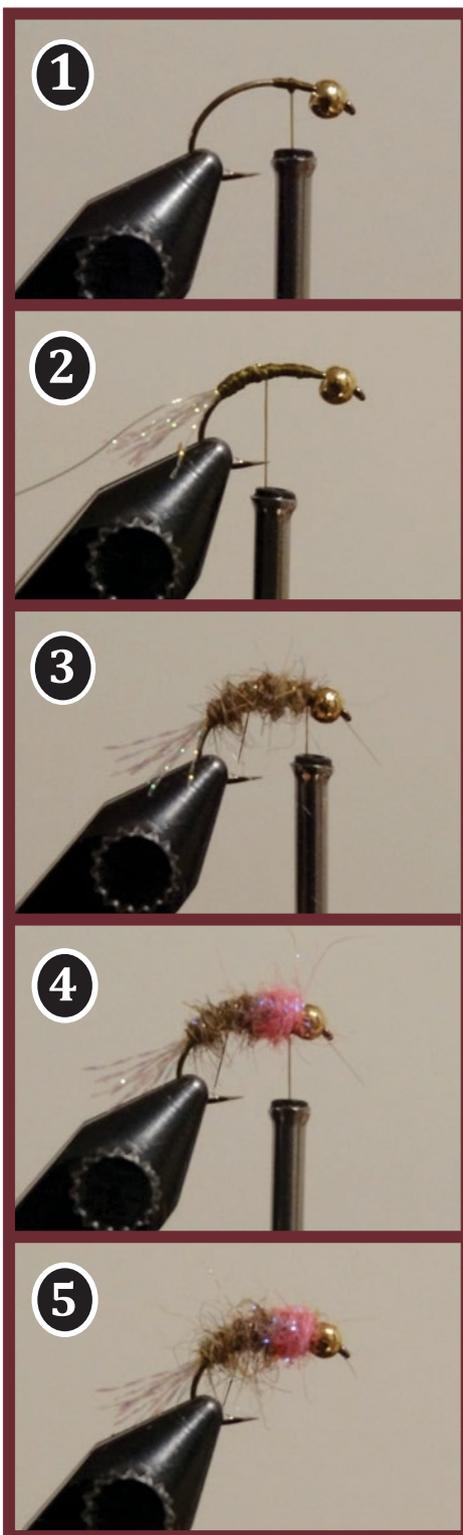
by Carl Haensel

photos by the author

The Pink Squirrel is a great choice as a go-to fly for the beginning of trout season. A basic, easy-to-tie nymph, the Pink Squirrel combines the attractive qualities of a variety of different patterns into one classic design. Originated by John Bethke in the spring creeks of Wisconsin's Driftless area, it works exceptionally almost anywhere trout are found. Buggy, bright and boisterous, it is a great choice to tie on early, and works wonders in off-color waters and fast runs.

Equally at home in deep pools, the Pink Squirrel has been known to fool trout when other flies fail. The key to making the Pink Squirrel work is to fish it well. This may seem basic, but the true secret is that no fly is magic. Some flies are better than others, but reading the water and finding where fish are holding will make a big difference on opening day. In the beginning of trout season, trout in cold water hold in slower, calmer pools. Fast runs and riffles may hold fish on warm days. But, if the temperature plummets, look for fish to rest in good holding water. Fish the Pink Squirrel slowly through these slower runs and pools, making sure to get deep in the water column and have your fly tick along the bottom. Use a strike indicator to show the progress of your flies, and make sure to set the hook at the smallest disturbance. If you are fishing a two fly rig, use the Pink Squirrel as the lead fly and a natural pattern like a small pheasant tail, scud or caddis larva as a trailer.

When the water warms, start fishing the Pink Squirrel in faster water. Its appearance works well when imitating the clinging mayfly



nymphs and stoneflies that inhabit these areas. Look for rocky areas or deep runs to produce well. When using larger, brighter nymphs like this one, it pays to cover a lot of water. If you are not catching fish, keep moving. Often, active fish will be aggressive and bite in the first dozen casts. If the fish keep biting, you are in luck. If not, keep exploring the water for the next secret hole.

The Pink Squirrel works best when using fox squirrel fur with plenty of guard hairs and body fur to provide a buggy, reddish appearance. Available at local fly shops and online, you can buy the dubbing, but it is also available in your own backyard. For hunters looking to use their quarry, this fly offers special appeal and can be a great way to connect with nature. ☐

Tying the Pink Squirrel Materials

Hook: Scud hook, size 12 to 16

Thread: 6/0 tan fly tying thread

Rib: Medium copper wire

Body: Natural fox squirrel/antron dubbing blend

Collar: Hot pink UV ice dubbing

Bead: 1/8-inch brass bead

Tail: Krystal Flash

- 1 Begin the fly by threading the bead onto the hook. Next, secure the hook in the vise, and attach the thread to the hook.
- 2 Tie in Krystal Flash for the tail of the fly, trimming it to roughly 1/8-inch on a size 14 hook. Tie on the wire, leaving it hanging back toward the rear of the hook.
- 3 Dub the squirrel dubbing forward almost to the bead on the hook shank. Then, wrap the wire forward over the dubbing, and tie it off.
- 4 Dub in the collar using two to three wraps of hot pink UV ice dubbing, building it up snugly against the bead.
- 5 Whip finish the fly. Then, pick out the dubbing for maximum effectiveness, creating a buggy looking nymph. Add head cement, and you are ready to hit the water.