



Tying With Mink

By: Tom Deschaine

The fur of semiaquatic mammals like the mink, otter, muskrat, beaver and others, all possess oils that help them shed water. These oils provide the fur with a natural ability to float better.

The American Mink (Neovison vison) are found throughout Canada and in all but the southwestern portion of America. Their fur provides a wide variety of fly tying opportunities and has been used for years in streamer, nymph, scud and dry fly patterns. My first experience tying with mink was with an old pattern created by Leonard Wright called the, "Fluttering Caddis."

The American Mink can grow to over two feet long. Their hair is extremely dense, soft and supple. The hair of the male animal is slightly longer than that of the female. The shades of mink range from coal black to light dun (with every possible shade in between). Their pelts are highly prized by furriers and are used in the manufacturing of coats and stoles. Untreated pelts still contain the natural oils. Although treated or tanned pelts no longer contain the natural oils, the fur still retains some of its ability to float well.

The translucent guard hairs are very spiky and impart a very buggy appearance to flies. They can be used for wings, underwings, tails and shucks and can be incorporated in to almost any pattern.

The dense underfur of the mink makes an excellent floating dubbing that can be used on its own or can be substituted for muskrat, otter, sable or beaver.

Here are a few dry fly patterns to get you started:

Mink Tail Caddis

Hook: Dry fly, #10-18
Thread: Black, 6/0
Body: Peacock Herl
Wing: Mink tail hair, tied down
Hackle: Brown & Grizzly, mixed

Sparkle Wing Caddis

Hook: Dry Fly, #14-20
Thread: Yellow, 6/0 or 8/0
Body: Pale yellow rabbit dubbing
Underwing: Dun mink tail guard hairs
Overwing: Light Ginger elk or deer body hair
Hackle: Ginger

Fluttering Caddis

Hook: Dry fly, #10-18
Thread: Black, 6/0
Body: Muskrat fur dubbing
Wing: Mink tail fibers, tied caddis style
Hackle: Medium dun

A quick search of the internet will reveal that mink tails, body hair and scraps can be acquired from many fly tying companies, furriers or trappers. Still another source would be old garments. If it were not for its expense, I'm sure more tyers would take the opportunity to incorporate mink into their patterns.

See you on the water.....

Tom Deschaine

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