

## Muddling Along September 19, 2015

### Fluorescent tying materials—a reprise

**From: Ian Stewart Received: September 13, 2015 3:32pm**

I have returned to the everyday life of Yellow Point, back to construction projects, walks in the back 40, and sneaking away for the occasional fishing trip after a summer of galliVANting around the West Coast. The eurovan camper performed very well with the addition of some new bug screens and an awning.

I thought I would take another crack at the mysteries of fluorescent materials and how they can be useful additions to your fly tying repertoire. To begin with, a review of some of the terms and what they mean exactly followed by some suggestions as to where these materials are useful.

Terms you will encounter when buying materials include:

UV – short for ultraviolet, a wavelength of light that is shorter than the visible light we use to see but which is visible to other species on the planet, including birds of prey, some insects and some fish (salmonids like trout and salmon are the ones we're mostly interested in). Fly tying materials that say UV on them do not look any different to us because we cannot see reflected UV light. Salmonids can however, and will sometimes target flies which include "UV reflective" materials.

Fluorescent—a term used to describe materials which emit visible light (which we can see of course) when UV light is absorbed by them. Chartreuse materials are almost always fluorescent and many pink and orange materials are as well. You can determine if they are fluorescent by shining a UV flashlight on them and they will "glow in the dark" with sometimes surprisingly different colours from their colour in visible light. Another term for these materials is "UV reactive".

These materials are advantageous to use at times because UV light will penetrate further through a layer of water than any of the visible light colours (ROYGBIV, or colours of the rainbow.) This penetration occurs at depth as well as in a horizontal direction. This means that the UV Reactive materials will give off their colours at depths or distances where normal colours just look grey. UV Reflective materials will reflect the UV light which hits them (which we can't see remember) so will be visible to fish at greater distances and depths than non UV materials.

It is always a good idea to have some of both kinds of fly in your kit because it can make the difference between a good day and a fantastic day! Often all that is required to make a difference is a "hotspot" on the fly which could be UV bead head, collar, tag at the end of the body, a tail, or a bit of material in the wing or tail.

Natural materials which are UV reactive are very rare in nature (unlike on the shelves of your favourite fly shop!) but UV reflective materials can be found in bird feathers. The upland game birds (including pheasants, quail, grouse as well as peacocks) and some waterfowl have UV reflective feathers. The light coloured feathers (white especially) are more strongly reflective than the dark coloured feathers. This might explain the

success of some of our traditional patterns such as the Royal Coachman with its white wings and peacock herl body.

In summary, we know that UV Reflective and UV Reactive materials can sometimes be used to increase the effectiveness of our fly patterns. Any fly box should include some patterns which have UV materials incorporated into the pattern.



A fluorescent tag “hotspot”



Royal Coachman (UV reflective wing and tag)



Fluorescent head on egg sucking leech.