

Masters at the Bench

Son Tao/By John E. Wood



Quill Soft Hackle



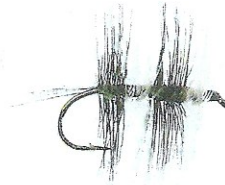
Copper John



Brown Stonefly



Wire & Rubber Golden Stone



Bivisible Dapper



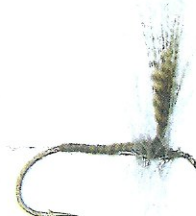
Quill Cripple



Quill Stimulator



Semperfli Nymph



Quill Gordon



Humpty



Orange Stimulator



Simple Quill Nymph



Fan Wing



Beadhead Soft Hackle



Thirty Incher



Quill Hammer

Pascal Pond, WA

By Don Vachini

Upon hearing that I'd never caught a tiger trout, my friend Brandon Parker pointed me to Pascal Pond, a tiny lake in the mountains near his home in Washington state, where this species resides. Hatchery-produced, sterile hybrids between male brown trout and female brook trout, tiger trout have been planted in select waters throughout the state by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife Department (WDFW) since 2001.

With a heightened sense of anticipation, I met Parker at the East Wenatchee airport in late September. The following morning, we planned a day hike to this little-known water in quest of tiger trout. However, during the evening, a savage storm enveloped the mountains above the city, dumping up to 10 inches of snow at elevations above 3,000 feet and producing the community's coldest September temperature since 1943. With Pascal Pond sitting at 4,268 feet, our plans were temporarily delayed.

Spanning just 4 acres, Pascal Pond (aka H and H Reservoir Number One) is located in north-central Washington in the Mission Ridge area of Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest, 8 miles southwest of East Wenatchee. Open year-round, the little impoundment is stocked annually with fingerlings by the WDFW under a put-and-grow philosophy, according to Rick Graybill, the fishing department manager at Hooked on Toys & Sporting Goods, (509) 663-0740,



PHOTO BY DON VACHINI

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www.hookedontoy.com. A reputable source of local angling information, he believes the combination of plentiful insect life and nutrient-rich water accounts for rapid growth of Pascal's tiger trout, which commonly reach 12 inches. Graybill recommends size 12 to 14 beadhead Woolly Buggers, leeches, Carey Specials, Elk Hair Caddises, and nymph patterns.

Last September's snowfall created multiple challenges for Parker and me, but we persisted. Two days later, unsafe drifts halted our drive about a half mile below the Beehive Reservoir trailhead. So on foot, using a handheld GPS to decipher the route, and bundled in rain suits and snow boots, we high-stepped around fallen trees, under sagging limbs, and through virgin powder for 1.3 miles to Beehive and beyond. Pascal's entire shoreline was a blanket of white, rimmed by snow-enshrouded Douglas fir and ponderosa pine. The silence was pervasive. The temperature was 38 degrees.

My first tiger didn't come easily. Scattered patches of aquatic growth dotted the center of the pond, and trout held tight there. With every step an adventure, I tentatively made my way along the shore to a slight gap in the timber. After I struggled to maintain balance on the steep incline and repeatedly came up short on my casts, an offering finally landed on the edge of a weedbed. A slight twitch produced an assertive strike—and a welcome bend in my 4-weight rod. Dark vermiculations over a grayish torso, fading to a butter-cream underside, identified my foot-long quarry. I admired the fish, then carefully removed the beadhead Woolly Buzzer from its lip and slipped it back into the chilly water. We landed eight fish during our two-hour visit, each painstakingly finessed from alongside weedy tangles. A size 14 beadhead Pheasant Tail Nymph was the only other fly we used.

In the absence of a sudden, heavy snowfall, the lake is easy to find: from Wenatchee, follow Squilchuck Road south for 7 miles, bearing right at the fork onto Mission Ridge–Wenatchee Mountain Road. After 1 mile, turn right onto dirt Forest Service Road 9712 (aka Beehive Road) and follow it for 2 miles to Beehive Reservoir. Park and hike along the trail another 0.8 mile to Pascal. A few primitive campsites exist at Pascal, but 12-acre Beehive Reservoir offers U.S. Forest Service campsites (and planted rainbow trout). Abundant dining and lodging options are available in Wenatchee (www.wenatchee.org).

After our cold adventure into Pascal Pond, Parker and I enjoyed a hearty taco dinner and Corona beers back in town. In retrospect, the rigorous, weather-related obstacles only served to enhance my memorable tiger trout experience.



PHOTO BY DOON WACHINI

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