

Red Fox Squirrel-Hair Nymph

SWTU Intermediate Fly Tying; Phil Anderson; Feb. 28, 2024

Download course pattern sheets at <https://app.box.com/s/03ldwk3od14q2opksw1tjkq67q4810xz>

The softness, shine, translucency, and buoyancy of natural fur is unsurpassed for imitating insect bodies on wet flies and nymphs. Fur transmits light *through* the fibers, and insect translucency is beautifully imitated by fur dubbed thinly over a thread base whose color matches the natural. As the fur absorbs water, it becomes soft, flexible, and seductively lifelike.

Dave Whitlock's Red Fox Squirrel-Hair Nymph (RFSHN) is a thoroughly excellent pattern that is effective in virtually all trout waters. Whitlock (1934-2022) was a lifelong Oklahoman who educated generations of Americans on the delights of both cold- and warm-water fly fishing. His books, magazine articles, artwork, teaching skills, and friendly personality demystified our seemingly complex sport, thus making it approachable by beginners and experts alike. Whitlock was one of the more influential fly anglers of our time. In 2021, *Fly Fisherman* magazine completed the daunting task of selecting the four most influential fly fishers of the previous 50 years for a figurative "Mt. Rushmore of Fly Fishing". Dave Whitlock shared the honor with Joe Brooks, Lee Wulff, and Lefty Kreh.



Whitlock learned fly fishing and tying at a young age by reading *Field & Stream* magazine. Having no access to exotic or pricey materials, he made do with thread from his mother's sewing kit and the proceeds of his Oklahoma hunting (rabbits, squirrels, game birds, etc.). Such "blue collar" materials figure prominently in hundreds of fly patterns that Whitlock designed over the decades. His most famous flies are, arguably, the RFSHN, Dave's Hopper, NearNuff Crayfish, and Sheep Minnow. When asked to identify his single most effective fly in all waters and under all conditions, Whitlock quickly and confidently answered "the RFSHN". He developed the pattern in the late 1960s, having been influenced by the writings of Polly Rosborough (*Tying and Fishing the Fuzzy Nymphs*, 1965). Like many champion nymphs, the RFSHN owes its success in large part to the underwater magic of soft animal fur.

Red Fox Squirrel-Hair Nymph

Hook: 2X-long, heavy wire, nymph hook, #4 - #20

Thread: Uni 8/0 or UTC 70d, orange

Weight: (Optional) Non-toxic wire, .015" for larger hook sizes

Tail: Small tuft of back fur from a red fox squirrel skin

Rib: Oval gold tinsel or orange-pearlescent Flashabou

Abdomen: Belly fur from a red fox squirrel skin mixed 50/50 with sienna or fox tan Antron dubbing **OR** Dave Whitlock SLF RFSHN abdomen dubbing

Thorax: Back fur from a red fox squirrel skin mixed 50/50 with charcoal Antron dubbing **OR** Dave Whitlock SLF RFSHN thorax dubbing

Wing/Legs: On hook sizes #12 and larger, a soft-hackle collar of dark ginger hen hackle or the mottled brown feathers of a Hungarian Partridge back (one turn, length to about the hook barb). For smaller hook sizes, simply pick out spikey dubbing fibers of the thorax
