

Flies tied to personal cause

Dad makes, sells Giles Clouser to help fight twins' disease

March 28, 2010

Fly tyer Stuart Patterson of Palm Bay was among those sending e-mails about my column two weeks ago featuring the orange-bellied MirrOdine being a hot lure for seatrout.

"I thought I would let you know about a fly that I tie that is very successful," Patterson wrote. "Capt. Gary Giles came up with the color combination several years ago, and it uses similar colors."

On Patterson's Web site, I found the Giles Clouser indeed has an orange color scheme similar to the 17MR-808 MirrOdine by MirrOlure. But because it's a Clouser, the fly rides hook up when retrieved. That places the orange color on the top portion of the fly, not on the belly.

It's doubtful that it matters much to seatrout where the orange appears on a lure.

For materials in the Giles Clouser, Patterson mixes golden yellow and fire-orange Extra Select Craft Fur, a synthetic material, for the orange look. The rest of the construction includes 1/30th-ounce yellow lead eyes, pink Krystal Flash in the midsection and a white belly of Extra Select Craft Fur. It's tied with red thread on a No. 2 Mustad Signature Series hook.

Soon after developing the pattern, Giles allowed Patterson to tie the fly and sell it as part of his Web site selection.

This is where the story of Stuart Patterson the fly tyer takes on a personal and very meaningful chapter.

Patterson donates all profits from the online sale of his flies to the American Syringomyelia Alliance Project, an organization researching the rare progressive spinal disease called syringomyelia.

Stuart and Sara Patterson's 15-year-old twin daughters, Hope and Holly, have the condition. At age 6, both girls were diagnosed with intracranial hypertension, or pseudotumor cerebri. Holly also was diagnosed and treated for tethered spinal cord, syringomyelia, and other related conditions.

Each of the girls had cranial expansion surgery in 2007. It worked for Hope but not for Holly, whose condition continues to be severe with constant pain, debilitating headaches and other problems.

"I enjoy tying flies almost as much as I enjoy fly fishing," Patterson said. "However, that is not why I have decided to sell my flies online."

The idea of fundraising for the alliance project started several years ago when Holly, who has undergone 28 surgeries and procedures to date, decided she wouldn't allow her condition to determine her future. So she and Hope began working together to raise money for medical research through the alliance.

"Holly hopes to raise \$40,000 before she graduates high school," Patterson said. "That's when I decided to turn my fly tying interests into another revenue stream for my daughters' fundraising ventures."

Holly's story, and ways people can contribute to the alliance, are on her Web site at www.helpholly.org.

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On the home page, Holly writes, "This is a battle that we haven't beaten yet. But we will."

As a Harris software engineer, the 42-year-old Patterson designed his own fly fishing Web site that includes the story of his daughters' conditions, family pictures, catches and details about his fly patterns.

He sells a dozen different patterns and the selection varies from time to time. In addition to the Giles' Clouser, two of the best for local saltwater species, says Patterson, are the Norm's Schminnow and the Craft Fur Shrimp.

Patterson's flies sell for \$2.99 and \$3.99, plus shipping. Payment is made with credit cards through PayPal.

The Web site is pattersonsaltwaterflies.com.

"After the cost of my materials, all the money goes to the alliance project," said Patterson, who was born at Patrick Air Force Base when his father was in the military and returned to Brevard County later in life.

"I tie quality saltwater flies for tarpon, snook, redfish and trout. Living near the Indian River Lagoon, I get to experiment with a number of different fly patterns, modifying colors, adding or removing flash, and even changing the swimming characteristics of a fly."

Most of the Pattersons' funds for the alliance project have come through private donations. Other proceeds came from yard sales and raffles, including guided fishing trips donated by Central Florida captains Mike Badarack, John Kumiski, Tom Van Horn, Shawn Williams and Giles. Coastal Angler magazine donated a booth for the Pattersons at its annual sportsman show in Melbourne.

Patterson sees the online sales of his flies as just one more source for medical research.

"Your purchase will result in excellent flies, good karma, and maybe that little bit of extra luck you need to land that fish of a lifetime," Patterson said.

Contact Bill Sargent at sargentwb@gmail.com

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