

Shipman's Buzzer

Rob Denson ties his preferred version of this modern classic



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AS AN ENTHUSIASTIC photographer, I'm always seeking inspiration from my favourite professionals and friends, photography websites, and the entries and results from competitions. Photography can be very subjective, but there is a benchmark I use to tell when I've spotted a winner, which goes something like this: "Damn! I wish I'd taken that." Occasionally I come across a photo that's so good I am consumed by jealousy. Eventually the jealousy subsides and I am able to evaluate the image objectively, appreciate it, enjoy it and learn something from it.

The same goes for fly-tying. I've lost count of the flies that I've admired and been moved to copy – it must run into the thousands – but the number of "Damn! I wish I'd tied that" flies are much, much fewer. The Shipman's Buzzer is one of them.

Created by Rutland regular, Dave Shipman, in the late '70s, Dave's eponymous Buzzer caught on like a dubious teen fashion item, proliferating rapidly around the country. Conceived for dealing with trout feeding on emerging rather than ascending buzzers, it's easy to forget just how innovative Dave's baby was. Wet nymph or pupae Buzzer patterns and associated techniques had already been well covered, starting with Dr Howard Bell's classic black and silver nymph Buzzer, which he developed on Blagdon in the 1930s. Dry or emerging Buzzer patterns had hitherto virtually no following, indeed,

back in the late '70s stillwater dry-fly fishing of any kind was a dark and mysterious but rapidly burgeoning art. Stillwater dry-fly development and fishing techniques pushed on in the '80s and early '90s, leaving the rich legacy of patterns and techniques we have today.

The Ship, as I call it, has been working wonders on surface-feeders for around 40 years; it's done the same for me for nigh-on 30. I say surface-feeders as opposed to buzzer-feeders, as despite the name, the Ship is pretty much accepted as the ultimate general-purpose, super-versatile stillwater dry-fly/emergent. This fly has given me more red-letter days in more diverse conditions and situations than any other. During a buzzer hatch on the Lake District's Watendlath tarn in snow and sleet, the Ship ensured that the action was hot. On several occasions on Stocks Reservoir, the Ship made a more than passable impression of a soldier beetle. Black versions have kept the rod bent in a hoop when hawthorns and heather flies have been on the menu, and I've lost count of the times a Ship has been cast and has caught any fish that has dared to pop its snout through the surface, regardless of what it was taking.

Simplicity and that essential buzz of life are, as always, desirable. All that's required is a straightforward goal – and the right materials to achieve it. Dave's masterstroke, evidently, was being blissfully unconcerned with counting body segments and tails to give his Buzzer any great degree of entomological identity or accuracy, and more concerned with colour, size and attitude (the way the fly sits on or in the surface film).

If you haven't fished one yet, then remedy that immediately. Fish the Ship singly or in twos or threes. Tease out the seal fur, dress lightly with floatant and place in front of rising fish. How hard can it be? I'm sure I would have invented this one... eventually. **T&S**

TYING TIPS

- A really quick, easy tying, which is another plus point for an already perfect fly. The amount of dubbing is the key: too little, and the weight of the hook will overwhelm the dubbing and the fly will sink; too much, and the fly will lose credibility with the fish.
- You'll see plenty of variants tied with different furs and synthetics, or deer hair for the breathers. Feel free to try them, but trust me, you won't significantly improve the dressing shown here.
- Fiery brown will serve you well in most hatches, but matching local buzzer hatches won't harm. I also carry black, and bright red, which is indispensable where there's red in the evening sky.



Hook Size 8-16 Kamasan B170, B400 or similar fine- or medium-wire hook **Breathers** White Poly yarn **Body** Fiery brown seal fur, well picked out **Rib** Mirage or gold tinsel **Thread** White

The fly you see here is, strictly speaking, a variant. I believe Dave's original used gold tinsel, and he made only two, well-spaced turns spread over the rear half of the fly. Rightly or wrongly, the dressing is now commonly accepted as Mirage/pearl Mylar, ribbed the full length of the body. This is also the version I favour.