

Muddled May

Try it in the tail position, recommends *Rob Denson*



TYING TIPS

- Keep the wing loose by tying in just a few mallard fibres one or two at a time.
- Rake out the seal's fur and Ice Dub with velcro.
- Search for tutorials on YouTube for tips on tying muddled heads.

Tail Rabbit dyed olive **Butt** Gold holographic tinsel **Rib** Gold holographic tinsel **Body** 50:50 golden-olive seal's fur and gold Ice Dub
Shoulder hackle French partridge dyed yellow
Wing Bronze mallard **Head** Natural roe deer
Thread Olive UTC 70 denier; 140 denier for muddling the head



ROB DENSON has fly-fished for trout for 25 years, visiting all four corners of Britain and Ireland, combining his love of fly-tying, photography and a rolling wave. Web: robdenson.co.uk

CAST YOUR MIND BACK three months to the middle of February when the jetstream or something got its knickers in a twist. From Dover to Durness, we basked in glorious sunshine, with temperatures getting into the 70s somewhere in the UK every day for more than a week. All well and good for high tea on the veranda, but what, if anything, did our trout and invertebrates make of it? This is exactly the kind of unseasonable weather event that gets theories simmering, ready to be served up when fishing is poor and excuses are needed. Or perhaps the reverse will prove to be the case and the February blip will be proclaimed as the reason behind a bountiful spring.

One theory I've already heard asserts that the mayfly will be several weeks early; another propounds they will be several weeks late. Another suggested that Brexit would in some way be affected, but I glazed over before the second syllable. Personally, I don't set great store by such theories; what will be will be. Mayfly are never on cue anyway: a week early, a week late, maybe two. I decided to risk it, then, and put this year's mayfly pattern in the issue you'll read in May.

You'll have spotted that the Muddled May is not your usual mayfly: it's a wet one, and it's a Muddler. Dry Mayflies are wonderful things, and pitching one at rising fish is, for most of us, the stuff of dreams and the epitome of fly-fishing. I'm no different, but on stillwaters, if you wait for a rise you'll be missing

out on super sport. Conditions don't always allow for the romantic approach, but once the hatch has been in full swing for a day or two, the fish are tuned in and looking for trouble, below as well as on the surface. One of my fondest mayfly memories takes me back to Lough Conn in the early '90s. The fanwings, one-feathers and spinners were duly tied, and we dreamed the dream. When we got there, the reality was slightly different to the brochure. Stiff winds and leaden skies kept the dry-flies in their box but the wet-fly fishing was exhilarating (read more about that, and the Miller's May, in *T&S* May 2017) and shaped my fly-fishing proclivities.

For around ten years, the Muddled May has featured regularly on my wet-fly casts when the mayfly are up. Simple, classic wet-fly fishing is all that's required: floaters and intermediates are the order of the day, with shortish casts and a medium-to-brisk retrieve, lifting and holding the flies towards the end. Top-dropper is fine, if that's how you prefer to fish your Muddlers, but I do like my Muddlers on the tail from time to time, especially in conjunction with intermediates or even a Di3. With the Muddler on the tail, the rest of the leader describes a lovely arc, taking the droppers through a range of depths, but accounting for many fish itself.

Don't fish it exclusively as a mayfly pattern, though. The Malham May took my best Malham (where there are no mayfly) fish of 2012, a beast of around 6lb that cartwheeled as it erupted out of a wave to take the fly. Tie some up and hold on tight. **T&S**