



# Stewart-style Cruncher

**Rob Denson** ties a nymph inspired by a past master



**Hook Size** 10-14 Kamasan B175 and B170 or Fulling Mill 31531 **Tail** Cock hackle fibres: try furnace, olive, badger or cree  
**Rib** Fine gold wire **Body** Pheasant tail, dyed olive **Thorax** Seal fur, dyed olive  
**Hackle** Hen, to match tail  
**Thread** Black or olive



**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. Website: [robdenson.co.uk](http://robdenson.co.uk)

I HAVE FAR too many nymphs. Probably far too many flies in general. But that's not necessarily a bad thing. Simplicity may be the cornerstone of our sport, but without the variety provided by a well-stocked fly-box, heads would soon drop on "slow" days.

Sometimes we need options to give us the belief that we can change things for the better. On the other hand, flies aren't the be-all and end-all of a successful day: there are other, often more important matters to consider, such as line choice, where we fish and how we retrieve. Fly choice is seldom, if ever, the whole story behind a dry net.

It's strange that I have so many nymphs. Over the course of a season, nymphing probably only accounts for 15 per cent of my fishing. I like simple patterns, and I've noticed over the years that fish like them too. Many tyers seem hell-bent on cramming as many so-called "triggers" on to a hook as they can. Invariably a waste of time, effort and materials. I'm firmly in the Dick Walker camp, especially when it comes to nymphs: if a human perceives a semi-circle and a triangle as a Chinaman in a hat, then I'm damn sure a couple of wisps of fur and feather is enough to fool a trout.

When I do eventually get around to having a cull in the nymph box, the Stewart-style Cruncher can rest easy. This one's been in my nymphing A-team for around eight years, following hot on the heels of the Rootbeer Cruncher that I tied a year or two earlier. I had great success with the Rootbeer, and still do, but I felt that a much drabber, duller affair, for use in good light when no flash or special effects are

needed, would complement the flashier Rootbeer version nicely. And it has, taking fish on virtually all the waters I regularly visit - Stocks, Roddlesworth and Malham Tarn - and also less-visited venues, such as Chew, Bewl, Blithfield and Foremark.

The idea behind the Stewart-style Cruncher came from W.C. Stewart's famous Black, Red and Dun Spiders. Wonderfully minimal and devastatingly effective, his Black Spider was a thread body and a soft starling hackle palmered along the top half. A real Chinaman-in-a-hat fly if ever I saw one, suggesting anything and everything that a hungry trout cares to see in this living, breathing stroke of genius.

Fish the Stewart-style Cruncher as you would any other Cruncher: slowly or even dead-drift when fishing a team of nymphs "straight through". The best lines for this approach are floaters and midge-tips, or occasionally slow intermediates. We can pick up the pace of the retrieve a little to a figure-of-eight if we switch to a washing-line approach, but anything faster than a fast figure-of-eight defeats the object of fishing nymphs in the first place. Fish them slowly and let the fish get a good look at the flies. Trust me, the simpler your flies are, the more scrutiny they will stand. **T&S**

"The idea behind the Stewart-style Cruncher came from W.C. Stewart's range of famous nymphs"

## TYING TIPS

- Wind the wire rib in the opposite direction to the pheasant tail body for extra security and strength.
- Do the same when winding the rib through the hackle.
- Tie in the hackle tip first, behind (to the rear of) the thorax. The barb length will then increase slightly as you wind towards the eye.
- Change the tail, hackle, body and thorax colours to suit your available materials and local hatches.