

Kate O'Mara

Reach for this redhead as the sun sinks, recommends Rob Denson

Hook Size 10 or 12 Kamasan B170 or B175

Butt Wine-coloured UTC holographic

Tail Two golden pheasant crests: red over natural or Orkney peach

Rib Wine-coloured UTC holographic

Body Seal fur mix: blood red and dark claret

Body hackle Ginger or red or brown cock or hen

Shoulder hackle Hen dyed sunburst or WOIGO

Thread Wine-coloured UTC 70



TYING TIPS

A standard wet-fly to tie. Pay attention to its proportions. If your golden pheasant crests curve differently, wet them and stick them to the side of a small round tumbler for ten minutes. They will dry with the same curve and be easier to tie in, one on top of the other.



ROB DENSON

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NO DOUBT YOU REMEMBER THAT special feeling you had the first time you duped a trout on a fly you had tied yourself. The chances are that it was a classic pattern and bore all the hallmarks of a classic first attempt. But it caught a fish and therefore you must have done something right.

Buoyed by success, your next challenge was to come up with your own design - to invent a fly - and fool a fish.

Against the odds, you pulled it off. The sense of achievement was even stronger.

This self-satisfied glow soon wears off, though, when reminded of something conveniently forgotten: that trout have a brain the size of a pea. They don't half use it well; at times it seems their existence is based upon making fools of us all.

Much of my tying combines the two previous scenarios. I put my slant on classic patterns. I have faith in the theory that the classics are classics for a reason, but that there is room for improvement. The Kate O'Mara was one such exercise that has paid off and the sultry redhead has been adorning my loch-style casts for a dozen years.

Full marks if you worked out that the classic which inspired me is the Kate Maclarens. The idea behind the tweak is simple, if not obvious. I've had much success with red, orange and gingery dry-flies when fish are on the fin at sunset, particularly if these colours feature strongly when the sun is close to the horizon. The light from the red part of the spectrum is absorbed and then seemingly

emitted triple-fold, giving a unique and attractive glow.

The translucency of materials like seal fur and cock hackle best exploit this phenomenon and practically radiate light, but any material that matches the colours in the sunset will give a fly a lovely, warm boost.

More often than not, when we get one of these sunsets the wind has dropped away and conditions are perfect for dry-flies. But sometimes the breeze holds sway and conditions are more suited to loch-style fishing with wet-flies. Can you see where I'm going with this?

Interestingly, hardly any of my wet-flies go overboard on the red and orange, other than the Soldier Palmer, which I was already using on a regular basis for the sunset-and-breeze scenario as a wet-fly and even occasionally as a dry-fly. The design of the Soldier Palmer, to my mind, makes it best suited to the top-dropper position, but I wanted more options. The Kate Maclarens has always been that most versatile of wet-flies and depending on the way it is dressed and the line that's used, it can be deployed at any position along the leader with equally consistent results.

Vehicle chosen, I re-dressed the Kate with red, orange and ginger hues. The resulting pattern has since proved its worth under apocalyptic sunsets on the main Orkney lochs, as well as Loch Watten and closer to home, Carsington, Stocks and Rutland. It's not an everyday fly or by any means a game-changer, but it's one that's worth having in the box for when the situation arises. **TRS**