

ORKNEY PEACH CRIPPLER

Rob Denson targets daphnia feeders with a highbrow alternative to the contentious Blob



MATERIALS

- Hook** Size 8-12 Kamasan B175
- Butt** Flat gold
- Rib** Oval gold, medium
- Body** Orkney peach seal's fur
- Body hackle** Orkney peach hen
- Shoulder hackle 1** Golden pheasant body feather dyed orange
- Shoulder hackle 2** Grizzle hen dyed Silver Doctor blue
- Thread** Claret

KNOW WHAT YOU'RE THINKING:

"It's a glorified Blob." Well, if you are, then you're not many miles from the horrible truth. Bear with me, though, while I make my defence.

I designed the Orkney Peach (OP) Crippler for my first trip to Orkney in 2011 – one of several million tied specifically for the trip. You know how it is when preparing to fish pastures new: books are bought and borrowed; old *T&S* articles dug out; and anyone you know who's fished the area before is declared your new best friend and cross-examined relentlessly for months. No stone is left unturned, every angle is covered. Then, and only then, can the tying begin.

Over the course of three subsequent visits, the OP Crippler was deployed on several occasions and several waters. It took the odd fish, but in general was nothing to write home about until it was let loose on Harray. Slow sport around the skerries in the morning, despite good conditions, made us head for deeper water as the cloud burned away and the sun beat down. The deepest water on Harray is the Golden Triangle, a vast abyssal plain, 15ft deep (deep by Harray standards) at the northern end of the loch. This is where, on the right day, you'll find large numbers of fish feeding hard on vast shoals of daphnia; the sort of place where one might be tempted to "match the hatch" and fish the greatest daphnia fly known to man – the orange Blob. But

TYING TIPS

- The golden pheasant body feather can prove tricky first time. Stroke the fibres backwards as you grip four or five fibres at the tip. Align the fibres horizontally, then strip fibres away from the base up until you are left with 10 or 12 fibres on each side. Tie the feather in by the four or five tip fibres that you have trimmed to a couple of millimetres. Gently "double" the fibres back as you would when doubling a standard hen or cock hackle, then wind around the shank. One turn is all you need, and 10/12 fibres should suffice.
- We're aiming for quite a chunky, bulky fly, so be generous with the hen hackle, applying at least five, if not six or seven turns.
- As always, rake out the seal's fur with velcro for extra buzz.

one doesn't take blobs to Orkney, or at least I don't. The nearest thing I had was the OP Crippler, and didn't it just work a treat? Repetitively casting out and then counting down a Di5 is hardly my idea of heaven, but when the cast comes back attached to one and sometimes two of Harray's stunning, butter-bellied torpedoes, the end justifies the means.

The Di5 with an Ess Cat Muddler (fluorescent cat green) on the tail to accentuate the curve, a Peach-and-Pearl Palmer on the middle, and the OP Crippler on the top dropper barely made a pass through the depths without registering some sort of interest. When the fish stuck, it was invariably to the OP Crippler. I'd found my daphnia fly and experienced one of my busiest and most exciting sessions on Harray.

Six hundred or more miles further south and my OP Crippler has worked as a daphnia fly just about anywhere I've tried it. There's a time and a place for everything, but with an OP Crippler you can kid yourself – and sometimes others – that you're doing something much more highbrow than fishing a Blob. ■

TIE THE OP CRIPPLER



1 Fix the hook in the vice and run the thread along the shank to the bend. Catch in a length of flat gold tinsel and apply touching turns to form the butt.



2 Secure and trim off the loose end of the thread along the shank to the bend. Catch in a length of flat gold tinsel and apply touching turns to form the butt. Dub on a generous pinch of peach fur and wind it along the shank.



3 Apply close turns of the fur until it has covered three-quarters of the shank. Having formed the body, prepare and catch in a peach hen hackle by its base.



4 Using hackle pliers, carefully take hold of the hackle by its tip and wind it along the body until it reaches the butt. The turns should be evenly spaced.



5 Wind the oval tinsel up through the hackle, locking its stem securely to the body. To avoid trapping fibres, wiggle the tinsel as each turn is applied.



6 Remove the waste hackle-tip. Prepare a golden pheasant body feather and catch it in by its trimmed tip. "Double" the fibres back and apply one turn.



7 Secure, then remove the feather's waste stem. Catch in a dyed blue grizzle hen hackle. Stroke the fibres back and, using hackle pliers, wind it towards the eye.



8 To create a full effect, wind on five or more turns of the hen hackle. Secure and trim the excess tip, then cast off. Finally, tease out the body fur.