

GOLDEN DABBLER

Don't leave harbour without this glowing modern classic, implores Rob Denson



MATERIALS

Hook Size 8-12 Kamasan B170 or B175
Thread UTC 70 denier burnt orange or similar
Tail Bronze mallard **Rib** Oval gold
Body Seal's fur mix — ginger/fiery brown/orange
Body hackle Ginger, red game or golden-brown cock
Cloak Bronze mallard

I'm almost certain the tail in the original dressing was pheasant tail; however, I use bronze mallard because it's more durable and matches the wing.

IT'S 25 YEARS SINCE DONALD "DABBLER" McLearn unleashed his eponymous fly on to an unsuspecting stillwater scene. The impact was seismic, making massive waves around Ireland and the UK in a few short years.

There's now a dabbler for each day of the year. Big, brown and bushy; sleek, skinny and shiny; and every permutation of style and colour in between. It can get confusing so I shall try to demystify. It's a wet-fly and wet-flies need movement, either imparted by the angler, running water, or both. As the dabbler is a stillwater fly the movement is imparted by the angler: anything from a slow figure of eight to a fast strip or roly-poly retrieve. Secondly, wet-flies need "the look", that *je ne sais quoi* that says "chase me, eat me". This is where the dabbler scores over many average wet-flies. The slope of the cloak, and the optical illusion of movement created by the subtle banding of the bronze mallard combine beautifully with the more traditional rear half of hackle and tail to create a lively, darty and dynamic fly. The overall effect is suggestive as opposed to imitative.

The dabbler is a top dropper, plying its trade

in the top few inches, suggesting anything and everything on the spring and summer menu — mayflies, sedges, daddies — that is likely to end its short life in the surface film and ultimately in a trout's mouth. To help get the Golden Dabbling in a trout's mouth, it has a few tricks up its sleeve. The warm, golden-gingery tones evoke summer flies, while the stiff, spiky cock hackle keeps it higher in the water for longer but also does a damn good job of suggesting legs and creating the illusion of life in general.

All that remains for you to do is attach it to a floating line or a slow intermediate and stroke the surface of your favourite stillwater. As always, stillwater wet-flies are much more effective when fished in teams of three than one or two, so if you haven't already, it's worth endeavouring to perfect the loch-style technique. With a Golden Dabbling on the top dropper and your favourites below, no trout will be safe. ■