

Peter Ross Dabbler

Rob Denson ties a variant of a fly you either love or loathe

Hook Size 10-12 Kamasan B170 or B175 **Tail** Ginger/brown cock hackle fibres, or bronze mallard **Rib** Silver wire or oval
Body Flat silver dubbed with red seal's fur over front third
Body hackle Grizzle hen dyed ginger, golden brown, or natural grizzle
Cloak Bronze mallard **Thread** Black UTC, 70 denier

CONFIDENCE IS everything in a fly. If you have it you'll catch fish; if you don't, you won't. I lost all confidence in the Peter Ross after making the mistake of choosing this classic pattern for my first attempt at fly-tying. I mean, how hard can it be? Famous last words, and the last time I went within a mile of a Peter Ross for about 20 years. A blindfolded chimp wearing boxing gloves would have done better. It was a mess. Tip: get at least a couple of dozen flies under your belt before attempting to tie a Peter Ross.

It could have been so very different. The confidence, albeit soon to be unceremoniously destroyed, was already there in bundles. As a young boy, I read, wide-eyed and wide-mouthed, about the classic flies. The Peter Ross was among my very favourite patterns, with its slick simplicity and stunning, graphic scheme of red, black, silver and teal. I doubt I was the first youngster or newcomer to be seduced by its charms, and something tells me I won't be the last.

Fly-tying disasters aside, the standard Peter Ross has long held a reputation as a "Marmite" fly - that is to say, one either loves it or loathes it. Interesting things, Marmite flies. Why some patterns should polarise opinion more than others will no doubt remain one of fly-fishing's little unsolved mysteries. I suspect, though, that the truth is quite simple, and has more than a little to do with the fact that those who love them know how and when to fish them, and those who loathe them don't. Of course, there's nothing quite like early success with a pattern to give clues as to when best to deploy it, and to build long-lasting confidence. Conversely, there's nothing quite like early failure to put one off for a very long time. Once or twice bitten, twice or thrice shy.

My confidence in the standard Peter Ross was a long time in being restored, and didn't come until I'd realised what the thing is actually meant to be. I'll keep it to myself, though. Why spoil a good puzzle? Look closely, and look hard and you'll get it. It really is quite simple... but you may have to squint. The epiphany was timely, coming shortly before the Peter Ross Dabbler was recommended to me by George Barron for the National Final in September 2009 on Rutland Water after George had had success with it on Rutland a few weeks earlier. The PR Dabbler was duly tied and tried on a balmy early autumn Rutland, working well on a floater or intermediate line,



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bringing a good few fish in practice and in the match.

Marmite or not, the Peter Ross is a pretty specific - some would say limited - pattern that benefits greatly, from being worked into the Dabbler template, which tends to broaden the remit of the original. The PR Dabbler is at home in any position but can be a great choice for that awkward middle-dropper selection.

It's funny how a simple twist can breathe new life into a hitherto neglected pattern, not to mention newfound confidence into the angler. Since George's recommendation, it has been a regular selection on my wet-fly casts, working well throughout the season on Bewl, Stocks, Loch Eye and most of the main Orkney waters. Don't worry too much about what is or isn't on the menu; corixa and fry, among other tit-bits, are covered here, while remaining at heart a great attractor. Not bad for a buzzer pattern. Oops!

TYING TIP

BEST RESULTS seem to come with a leaner tying, so try to keep the overall feel on the sparse side, allowing the Peter Ross to shine through the cloak and body hackle. **T&S**