

Black Pearl Hopper

*This lovely leggy fly is almost irresistible, claims **Rob Denson***



Hook Size 10-14 Kamasan B170
Rib Mirage **Body** Black seal fur
Legs Knotted pheasant tail, black or red **Shoulder hackle** Red hen
Head hackle Black hen
Thread Black

TYING TIPS

- Six legs, three on each side.
- Don't worry about the positioning of the legs – a few casts and a few fish soon make a mockery of any theories about legs up or legs down.
- Don't overdo the hackles. Two turns of each colour.



ROB DENSON

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NOTHING IF NOT capricious, British weather, not to mention fish, can stretch our resolve to the limit. The expression “four seasons in one day” can ring true in most months of the year, which is one of the reasons why I try to bring you simple, reliable, versatile flies.

Specialist flies are good to have in the box if only to give you the confidence to leave the house knowing that you're prepared if the fish decide to be impossibly difficult and will only look at a green-tailed Kate Maclaren with a red holographic rib and a double head hackle – one yellow and one blue. But a more reliable pattern is this simple and effective Hopper, which will do a job at practically any time of the season, and when there are four seasons in one day.


Derived from the Black Pearl Dabber (“Summer Flies”, *T&S* August 2015), the Black Pearl Hopper (BPH) has enjoyed much leader time over the last three or four seasons and become a summer favourite, not least because of its versatility. Its livery makes it a safe bet in all lighting conditions. Black is seldom, if ever, a bad choice. Red is a classic accompaniment with black on all types of fly. Pearl flash not only sits well with both colours, it works as well in poor light as it does in overcast conditions or bright sunshine. You'll have to get up early to find conditions that don't suit a combination of black, red and pearl.

The eagle-eyed among you will have spotted a more than passing resemblance to the heather fly. Yes, *bibio pomonae* was at the forefront of my thoughts when developing the Black Pearl Dabber, but it is not the Hopper's sole *raison d'être*. It does, however, look like a duck and quack like one.

When should you deploy the Black Pearl Hopper? There are plenty of options. Venue-wise, it has taken fish for me on Cow Green, Stocks, Malham, Bewl and Blithfield. As for methods, high and dry is the obvious first choice. Fished in a team of two or three dry-flies, or singly if the fish are spooky or a flat calm makes a clean and stealthy presentation difficult, it cuts an almost irresistible profile, heather fly or not, and holds rather temptingly in the film in calm conditions.

Here's a tip: small, sparse Hoppers also make superb adult and emerging buzzer imitations – a trick that the BPH pulls off very well indeed.

Dropping down an inch or two, or a line or two, if action on the surface is slow the BPH is a great pattern for fishing on a washing line. I'll often fish a pair – top and middle dropper – with a size 10 or 12 Booby on the tail.

Last, but by no means least, the BPH can be treated like a wet-fly. It will slot into any position, depending on the styles and sizes of the other flies, and take fish consistently on all lines from floater to Di7. When fishing wet, it is, by and large, a pattern that benefits from being fished on the slow side. The action, however, is usually thick and fast. 



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