

Mandarin Orange

Try this reddish fly to match terrestrials on stillwaters, suggests **Rob Denson**



ROB DENSON has fly-fished for trout for 25 years, visiting all four corners of Britain and Ireland, combining his love of fly-tying, photography and a rolling wave. Website: robdenson.co.uk

WHEN IT COMES to summer fly colours, I'm a big fan of red. Other colours will have their time and place, and reds are no guarantee of success, but ginger through to orange, scarlet, red, vermillion and claret feature heavily in my summer wet- and dry-flies and are never far from my leader.

High summer brings regular servings of big chunks of meat, not only in your back garden, but on our lochs and lakes, too, and when it's swilling around in the surface layers in strong summer sun, the transmitted light (light that shines through the insect) is invariably in the red part of the spectrum - being in the same ball-park, as they say, will pay dividends.

Some of my most memorable summer sessions have boiled down to simply showing the fish the correct colours, rather than presenting an oh-so-clever, slavishly close copy. I've learned over the years that colour can sometimes be an irrelevance. It can, however, be critical. I've proved this to myself many times by using what would appear at first glance to be inappropriate patterns to great effect. One occasion was eight or nine years ago when visiting Upper Roddlesworth Reservoir in the West Pennine moors. Arriving mid-afternoon for one of those impromptu "I just had to get out of the house" sessions, the water was dimpled the length and

breadth of the reservoir with trout lazily picking off soldier beetles. As is often the way when snatching a couple of hours, I was ill-prepared for the hatch (or fall) and nothing in my hastily gathered and very basic selection of flies ticked the right boxes. Right time, right place, wrong gear!

My favourite, tried-and-tested soldier patterns - Shipman's Buzzer and Paramidge - had been left at home with the rest of my dry-flies. As the trout slurped and burped, my rummaging became fevered, not to mention, desperate. A hitherto untried fly got a double-take, then a third glance, then a fourth. This fly, which had been tied up a few weeks earlier on a whim - one of those whims with no more thinking behind it than using a new material for the sake of it - had nothing more going for it in terms of a soldier beetle suggestion than its colour. But I had few, if any other options, so the Mandarin

"When food is in the surface layers, fly colour can be vitally important"

Orange got its chance.

Two size 12s, 5 ft apart, were attached to a 15 ft leader, and presented on a floating line. With the seal fur nicely raked out (using a velcro stick, which never leaves my bag) the plan was to lay the orange-bodied flies in front of moving fish, fishing them "damp" for a few moments, followed by a slow figure-of-eight retrieve. A couple of hours and a cricket score later, I hadn't got to the figure-of-eight part of the plan more than two or three times before the Mandarin Oranges were calmly and confidently taken.

Okay, so my preferred soldier patterns are still Shipman's Buzzers and Paramidges, but the Mandarin Orange is a versatile and successful addition to my fly-box. These days it's usually deployed in a more traditional role, the way I intended when it was conceived, as a top dropper on a summer wet-fly cast. The point is that when food is in the surface layers, colour can be vitally important, and never more so than in the summer months when trout actively seek terrestrials at the surface. **T&S**



Tail Mandarin flank fibres **Rib** Medium Mirage **Body** Orange or scarlet seal fur **Body hackle** Ginger or honey furnace hen **Shoulder hackle** Mandarin flank **Head/front hackle** Furnace hen **Thread** Burnt orange or red UTC

TYING TIPS

The Mandarin Orange is almost, but not quite, a Dabber: the fly is not cloaked in the same way as a Dabber. Simply add the mandarin a few fibres at a time, or alternatively, tie a mandarin flank feather in tip first, then make a couple of turns, sweeping the fibres back towards the tail end. A third method is to tie the mandarin fibres in first, pointing outwards from the eye, then sweep them back over the fly when the rest of the pattern is complete. This is the same method that some use for adding blue jay to a pattern.