

Haul a Gwynt



Haul a Gwynt (modern)

Hook Size 10-12 **Thread** Black **Body** Peacock herl
Rib Silver wire **Wing** Black crow
Hackle Cock pheasant neck feather

Haul a Gwynt (variant)

Hook Size 10-12 **Thread** Black **Body** Seal's fur mix:
sooty olive, brown olive, and a pinch of peacock ice dub
Rib Gold wire **Wing** Jay primary or secondary feather
Hackle Cock pheasant neck feather



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.

HEAD WEST OF Monmouth and funny things happen to road signs. Suddenly, everyday phrases make great-sounding names for trout flies! A little devil becomes Diawl Bach, and sun and wind becomes Haul a Gwynt. Sun and wind makes for hard going in any language and, as the saying goes, "Bright and breezy, never easy". If we take the Haul a Gwynt at its word, though – and we should – we can change the "never" to "seldom".

The original Haul a Gwynt, or so I am led to believe, called for black on black (crow wing/ostrich herl body); hardly a first choice for a cloudless sky, if traditional wisdom is to be believed. The modern substitution of the ostrich herl for peacock, would, perhaps, be a little more logical for a blue sky, but many tyers do still insist on black, and insist on bulk, and if ostrich herl is not available, then chenille will do – clues, I think, to the terrestrial leanings of the fly, and the reason for its name.

The H-a-G is in essence a fat little leggy thing, and fat little

leggy things abound in the hills and valleys of Wales, often finding their way on to the water. The coch a bonddu beetle, the hawthorn fly and the heather fly, to name a few, see to it that barely a month of the season goes by without a fat little leggy thing falling, and nothing gets them falling like the sun and the wind.

Despite the apparent suitability of the H-a-G for such occasions – and it does have its loyal adherents – I rarely if ever use a standard H-a-G. I'll concede that the H-a-G works, and works well, for some, but for me the standard is all a little too "photofit" – a rather awkward, incongruous, comical almost, collection of parts. Did any photofit ever remotely resemble the suspect, I wonder? I digress. As it sits somewhere between semi-imitative and caricature, I'm ill at ease with the standard H-a-G, its black wing and the excessively chunky herl/chenille body in particular. Time to tinker.

Four changes gave me the H-a-G that I wanted. First, a blae wing not only broke up the monotony of

black on black with the crow and ostrich, it also brought the wing colour a little closer to those of the bibio cousins, and, as a bonus, upwinged flies such as the olives. Second, a seal's fur body is essential, in my opinion, when it comes to suggestive wet-flies, which is why the herl body of the standard got the chop. Seal's fur brings life, colour, translucency, and that indefinable "buzz" to a wet-fly body. A pinch of peacock ice dub added to the seal's fur gave a nod to the standard H-a-G, as well as a subtle amount of flash. The addition of a hen hackle, palmered along the body, was the final tweak, bringing a little "kick" and complementary colour into the mix. The final tweak was the change from a silver to a gold rib, in keeping with the body hackle and seal's fur body.

While I wouldn't say my variant is any better than the standard, which after all has stood the test of time, and is a regular on many casts today, it does give me more confidence. With the appearance of the hawthorn fly and early olives, April is ideal for the variant. Many anglers will turn to the H-a-G as a first-choice Hawthorn, fishing it in a fall of fly. Not for me. I'll fish the variant when there's no sign of the seasonal fare. I'm covering bases here – "suggesting" – and hopefully appealing to fish that expect to see hawthorns and olives, but don't, taking hawthorn- or olive- feeders when there isn't a sign of fly on the water. When the olives do emerge, or the hawthorns fall, I'll switch to something more appropriate – various wet- (Bibio etc) or dry-flies for the hawthorn, and wet-flies (Mallard and Claret etc) for the olives.

The H-a-G variant is one of the, if not *the*, first traditional wet-flies that I reach for during the season. Prior to this, it's all nymphs, Buzzers and Boobies, but April and the H-a-G herald the onset of the type of flies and fishing that I love.



"A seal's fur body is essential when it comes to suggestive wet-flies"