



SKARA MONGER

A successful middle dropper pattern?
Can it be true? Rob Denson stakes his reputation

MATERIALS

- Hook** Size 10 or 12 Kamasan B175 or B170
- Thread** Wine UTC 70 denier **Rib** Gold wire
- Body** Rear half: opal Mirage. Front half: seal's fur mix — fluorescent orange and Orkney peach
- Body hackles** Rear: fluorescent orange cock. Front: grizzle hen dyed orange
- First shoulder hackle** Golden pheasant body feather dyed orange **Second shoulder hackle** Golden pheasant body feather natural red
- Third shoulder hackle** Grizzle hen dyed Silver Doctor blue

MY DEAR FRIEND AND OCCASIONAL fishing partner, Mr David Jones, is a geek. He has fishing logs going back to when glass rods were cool (first time around) and can thrill you with more stats than a covid conference. Oh, how the long winter nights must fly by. I've never been lucky enough to see his precious parchments, but if I know Dave at all, his log will be thorough, giving chapter and verse on the cunning capture of each and every fish he's deceived in the last 60 years. I suspect also that he can tell us how many of his fish fell for the

charms of the middle dropper. (Dave, if that's true, I'd dearly love to know.)

Stats are one thing, but explanations are another, and winter nights would be well spent discussing why the middle dropper is the least successful fly on the cast. Which is why when you catch on the middle dropper you should take note, and tie plenty.

Referencing both an Orcadian neolithic village and Bond villain, as well as being one of my better thought-out fly names, the Skara Monger is one of my favourite middle-dropper patterns. Tied in the

TYING TIP

Not an easy fly to tie. Make every turn of thread count. With many materials and hackles, things can spiral out of control and quickly become congested. Pay attention to thread placement, minimise the number of turns, and make them as tight as possible.

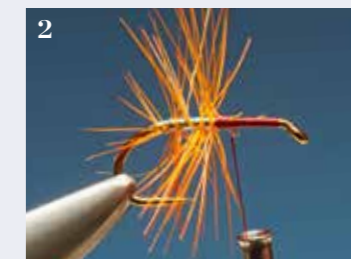
spring of 2011 for my first trip to Orkney — where it played a blinder — it has made a mockery of the usual balance of statistics. There were times on that first visit when, regardless of its position, the trout would look at nothing else. When this happens, my usual *MO* is to move the pattern to the middle dropper ... and keep it there. I don't need help with the ends of the cast — I have countless patterns that will hold their end up.

Funny thing, though, when I tied the Skara Monger I had no grand plan in mind. It was a simple exercise in coming up with a traditional wet-fly with a splash of flash and colour — an attention seeker. Sometimes they are taken with alacrity, sometimes they just draw fish in. It didn't take me long to notice that the Skara Monger was excelling at the former. Something else I noticed quickly was its efficacy in bright sunshine; the Skara Monger was turning out to be the gift that keeps on giving. And as if all that wasn't enough, it doesn't mind a jot on which line you fish it. Once you've established the productive depth, and decided on the line, all it asks for is its rightful place on the middle dropper, a rolling wave, and to be pulled back in the general direction of the boat. Vary your style and speed of retrieve until things go tight. And Dave, if you tie this one, you had better sharpen your pencil. ■

TIE THE SKARA MONGER



1 Run the thread to the bend and catch in a length of gold wire and opal tinsel. Wind enough turns of tinsel to cover half the shank, then secure and trim waste.



2 Now catch in a fluoro orange cock hackle and apply evenly spaced turns over the opal tinsel. Wind the wire through the hackle turns and secure the loose end.



3 Fold back the wire then apply the seal's fur dubbing mix to the thread. Wind on the dubbed fur to form the front half of the body, stopping well short of the eye.



4 Prepare an orange grizzle hen hackle and attach it in front of the dubbed section. Wind evenly spaced turns of the hackle as far as the rear body.



5 Now wind the gold wire through the orange grizzle hackle in open turns. Wiggle the wire at each turn to prevent it trapping the hackle fibres.



6 Secure the wire and trim the end along with the hackle-tip. Remove fibres from an orange GP body feather, leaving eight either side, and catch in by its tip.



7 Apply a turn of the orange GP feather then prepare and catch in the red GP feather in the same way. Apply a full turn then secure and trim off the excess.



8 Stroke the hackle-fibres back then apply a final turn of dyed blue grizzle hen hackle. Secure and remove the excess then cast off with a whip finish.