

{ MATERIAL OF THE MONTH }

IN A SPIN OVER DEER HAIR?

Rob Denson explains the best ways to use this versatile material in a range of fish-attracting patterns

With its drab but warm, natural hues and straight, buoyant hair, a roe deer patch can form the basis of dozens of patterns.

The top of the hair shaft contains a great mix of shades and has a lovely taper, which together bring life and movement to deer hair patterns.

Hair properties such as length, thickness, colour, density and buoyancy vary greatly with deer species, age, time of year harvested and body parts.

Cut bunches as close to the skin as possible, then trim to the desired length from the skin end.

DEER HAIR IS A CHEAP, EASILY available material which, with a little know-how and practice, can provide you with consistently deadly patterns. The array of deer species and “cuts” from different parts of the beast available to the tyer can be confusing so I will concentrate on the most useful and easily sourced of them all – the European roe deer. The hair from most parts of the roe is eminently suitable for all the flies, ideas and techniques mentioned in this feature and it is one of the easiest to handle. Look for straight, clean-looking hair with a staple (length of hair) of between 30mm-40mm. Very old hair will look grubby, dull and lifeless, and can be dry and brittle, so avoid.



DHE

Devilishly simple and twice as deadly, the DHE is a great fly on which to practise your deer hair handling skills. A slim bunch is cut from the patch, then tightly bound to the shank. Dub hare's mask or seal's fur up the body and “cock” the wing by adding a turn or two around its base.



ESS CAT (CAT-GREEN MUDDLER)

Bold colours can often be the difference between a red-letter day and a dry net. Luckily for fly-tyers, roe dyes beautifully and comes in a huge choice of colours, ranging from this spectacular fluorescent Cat-green to more subtle, natural-looking tones, such as olive and ginger. Don't forget, Muddlers fish just as well deep down on sinking lines as they do crashing through a wave. At depth, the combination of colour and the “noise” caused by the bulky head can be devastating.



MUDDLER

The Muddler is the pinnacle of the wet-fly tyer's art. This beauty from the vice of Arthur Macdonald is as good as it gets. The first couple of hundred are the hardest to tie; after that you'll start to improve.



CLARET HOG

Simultaneously a world-class wet-fly and dry-fly, the Hedgehog will test your deer hair handling skills as they progress. Slim bunches are tied securely along the hook shank, with a small amount of dubbing between each bunch. Natural roe tones are hard to beat, but a splash of colour can be devastating. Claret can be killing on dark, moody days. ■

DEER HAIR SEDGE

Deer hair flares when thread is tightened around the bunch and hook shank. Learning to control flare is the essence of tying with deer hair. Thin hair flares less than thicker hair, so is suited to forming slim, elegant wings for both wet- and dry-flies. This simple Deer Hair Sedge dry-emerger pattern will take everything from wild trophy trout in New Zealand to hungry stocked fish in UK reservoirs.



EMERGER

Muddlers and dry-fly wings are the most common and popular uses for deer hair, but thinking outside the box can give you many more options. Chopped, crumpled and dubbed deer hair forms the body of this unusual emerger pattern, giving it an irresistible bugginess, plus built-in buoyancy.



ROB DENSON

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PREPPING

Quality, sharp, straight scissors are all you need for trimming deer hair and shaping muddler heads. Curved scissors or razor blades, if anything, make shaping muddler heads more difficult.



Use a pencil as a guide to bunch thickness: roughly one pencil thickness for a size 12 muddler, slightly thicker for a size 10 and so on. A DHE wing will require approximately half a pencil thickness; about a third for hog bunches.



When spinning deer hair to form muddler heads, the hair is allowed to flare around the hook shank. It is then trimmed to shape. Visit YouTube to watch this being done. Once mastered, you can add more bunches along the shank to form floating fry, carp “biscuits”, large saltwater flies and mice.

