

Rob Denson's trout fly of the month

Quill and Pearl Cruncher



Hook Size 10-14 Kamasan B175 or 170 **Thread** UTC 70 denier brown-olive **Tail** Ginger, olive, cree or red game cock **Underbody** Pearl mylar or opal mirage **Overbody** Natural stripped peacock eye quill **Thorax** Hare's ear or grey squirrel mix, or ideally, a mix of the two **Hackle** Hen, to match tail



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: www.robdenison.co.uk

IF EVER I had a bogey fly, the Cruncher was it. I say "was"; we are friends now.

I like the Cruncher and the Cruncher likes me!

Funny things, bogey flies. We can fish them with all the zeal and zest we can muster, but to no avail. No amount of time and effort results in a fish. The scenario plays out time after time, until we just get bored with the fly and it is relegated to some dark corner, if not removed altogether from the box, never to be seen again.

I'd like to put forward a little theory. No great shakes; more an observation, really. Most flies arrive in our lives and our fly-boxes after a recommendation, either from a magazine, website or word of mouth. Some will not need a sales pitch, and will instantly capture our imagination, as well as a few fish. Some will become firm favourites, catching more than their fair share for years to come. Then there are the flies that are forced upon us - the flies that initially leave us cold and indifferent, foisted upon us by a succession of

magazine articles and/or almost evangelistic friends.

"This fly changed my life. Trust me, it will change yours." Not wanting to miss out, we buy, or tie, and try. These are usually the ones that fail us, spectacularly. It's no great mystery, really. It all comes down to that one magic ingredient that underpins most of our fly-fishing choices and successes and failures - confidence.

From the outset, I had no real confidence in the Cruncher. No confidence; no fish. The Cruncher was forced upon me; the magazines, my team mates, the whole world, it seemed, was happily fishing, and catching plenty of trout on, the Cruncher.

I could see how and why the Cruncher is a good, vague yet strong suggestion of a nymphal form. I could see how and why, depending on size and colour, carrying a few simple variants would cover practically every nymphal form that a trout could possibly fantasise about, let alone encounter. I just didn't like it. The fix, when it eventually

came, was surprisingly simple. I had hitherto been tying and fishing various dressings from various sources, and not my own patterns. Perhaps my own twist would imbue a little confidence, and allow me to actually like the pattern a little more? Bingo. Simple as that. My only trouble now is limiting myself to the number of variants I carry!

The Quill and Pearl is not the first Cruncher I caught fish on but an amalgam of a few relatively successful ones I've tried along the way. It quickly became a firm favourite and more often than not a first choice thanks to its ability to perform well under most kinds of light - a strong factor in stillwater fly selection. The pearl is broken down nicely by the dull natural quill, leaving just enough exposed to catch the light at depth and/or on dark days, and enough to suggest gas and eclosion when fished closer to the surface. It is a very pleasing and effective mix of traditional and modern.

The Pearl and Quill Cruncher is a great choice for April. As the water warms and subsurface fauna begins to stir, nymphing is a safe, very pleasant and productive option. As always with nymphs, slow, if not static, is the key. It is, after all, a nymph; let the fish take a look if it likes. A "gentle", natural presentation will do the rest. Being simple, streamlined and suggestive, the Cruncher can and does work at pace, too. I say "pace", but a fast figure-of-eight or the slow to medium draw of a washing line is as quick as it gets for me. There are those who can make the Cruncher talk, with fast-sinking lines and fast retrieves. They must have liked it a little longer than me. I have a little catching up to do!

TYING TIPS

- Tie in the tail fibres the full length of the body. This enables you to then cover with a flat bed of thread, then cover with a flat layer of pearl, and finally, a flat, smooth layer of quill. One has a knock-on effect on the other, and it all starts with the tail.
- When you have dressed the body, apply two layers of varnish to protect the quill. Leave to dry before recommencing.
- Two turns of hen at the head is plenty. Any more will affect mobility.
- Do try to keep your Crunchers "lean and mean". It does make a difference.



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