

Seal-fur Cruncher

Rob Denson shares a lean and mean buzzer imitation



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MAY, FOR MY money, is when the fly-fishing season gets going. March and April can be okay, but then again, so can a weight-watcher's ready meal when you haven't eaten for 12 hours. As we move into May, the odds of having to cast into the teeth of a howling blizzard are, in theory, dramatically reduced. Malham Tarn, my local and favourite wild brown trout water, opens on May 1 and while casting one's clout before May is out is not recommended at this altitude, it is possible on certain days.

Perhaps the best thing is the number of options, in terms of tackle and technique, which become available to us that will realistically take fish. Everything from lures on a fast-sinker to a delicately placed single dry-fly will have its place.

For many anglers, May represents the first chance to really get among the fish using their favourite flies and techniques. As a wet-fly fan, it's often the month when I'll start to consider a team of three traditional on a floater or intermediate as a first line of attack. If I can't fish my wets (not enough wind being the major factor that would stop me)

what could be better than a spot of quiet nymphing with warm, spring sunshine on my back, a light breeze, a cord ripple and fish on the fin?

This month's fly has evolved slowly but surely from the fruits of my earliest fly-tying efforts, the best part of 30 years ago. Take it from me, my early interpretations of this fly (apologies, but the names of the fly and its originator escape me) displayed none of the delicacy and subtlety of the latest incarnation. I don't even remember what the

original pattern was supposed to be, but I'd hazard a guess at a Diawl Bach variant. The sales pitch informed me that black and red was a great combination for buzzer and nymph imitations, so

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a handful were duly copied (I use the term loosely) and put to use one memorable spring morning on Swinsty Reservoir in the Yorkshire Dales where they were largely responsible for one of my first cricket scores.

The pattern was also largely responsible for that eureka moment that we all experience sooner or later - the one when you realise that flies chewed to within a millimetre of their lives are usually the most effective. Suffice to say, the replacements were tied in an altogether leaner, meaner style.

And so it went on for another 20 years or more. Every now and then came another exercise in streamlining - smaller hackle, fewer turns, thinner rib, skinnier tail - until the pattern you see here was reached about eight or nine years ago. Somewhere along the line it's morphed into a Cruncher, which is fine because in the Cruncher versus Diawl debate, I couldn't really make a convincing case for one against the other if I tried. You can mix and match them on the same leader, in any position, on any line, at any time of year. That said, if you feel imitation rather than suggestion is the way forward then the Cruncher is your man. In a light breeze, swinging around a few inches below the surface with light transmitting through the seal fur, and the hen hackle gently pulsing, the deception is complete. **T&S**



Hook Size 10-14 Kamasan B170 or B175
Tail Golden pheasant tippet **Rib** Red Gutterman's Sulky or fine red holographic, twisted **Body** Blood-black or ant-black seal fur **Cheeks** Jungle cock splits
Hackle Ginger/brown hen **Thread** Black

TYING TIPS

- Tie in one end of the rib, double it, then tie in the loose end. Twist the rib, then wind it over the body with hackle pliers.
- As always, vary the gauge of the hook to help control sink rate.
- Keep everything to the bare minimum: one turn of hackle, a tiny pinch of seal fur, and three or four tail fibres.