

# McConn's Ace (variant)

*A spring fly that's hard to define and even harder to ignore,  
writes Rob Denson*



## TYING TIPS

- A hook with a black-nickel finish sets off the Ace nicely; however, standard hooks work well.
- Less is more. This fly will be livelier if you keep the winging materials sparse and add only two turns of hackle.
- Try different colours of rib for different situations. Silver and gold are good alternatives.

**Hook** Size 12 Fulling Mill 31531 or Kamasan B170 or 175  
**Body** Black UTC 70 or 140  
**Rib** Fine red holographic  
**Underwing** Pinch of black marabou  
**Overwing** Bronze mallard  
**Head hackle** Black hen  
**Cheeks** Jungle cock splits



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**L**OOSELY BASED ON THE ACE of Spade, McConn's Ace, or my variation of it, secured a slot in my fly-box nine years ago and is best fished when our stillwaters begin to warm.

The original Ace of Spades is regarded as an out-and-out lure and when you consider that most people don't tie an Ace on anything smaller than a size 10 (often a size 8 or bigger) and that it's fished on its own and ripped back, that's fair comment. But it's the way one wiggles one's worm that counts. The Ace can be a devilishly good fry/small fish/leech suggestion when fished deep and slow.

The same holds true for many other flies, including the dreaded Blob: an anti-fly to some; outstanding daphnia pattern to others. Many flies have a second or even third string to their bow that isn't immediately obvious. Take a sideways look at your favourites and, more importantly, those you dislike and you may, after a few tweaks, be pleasantly surprised.

Maybe calling Sandy McConnachie's Ace an Ace is a stretch, but he's referenced his source,

run with it and come up with something fresh that suits his fishing. I've seen Sandy's pattern tied on curved buzzer hooks, which I'm sure work, and I suspect his *modus operandi* isn't a million miles from my own.

Firstly, it's scaled right down. It particularly suits a size 12, but I see no reason why it wouldn't work on a 10 or an 8 if you want to use it as a lure or mini lure. A size 12 seems to suit the way I fish it: slow to medium-paced retrieve, floating or intermediate line alongside two or three other flies with similar characteristics such as Cormorants, Crunchers, Spiders and small, sparse-ish wet-flies. Elements of all the aforementioned are present in McConn's Ace, making it such a wonderfully suggestive and lively fly that I could happily find a job for it on virtually any day of the year, and often do.

It can also be deployed with confidence in any position on the leader in most conditions, slotting into a nymphing situation on the top dropper, adding presence along a washing line, or blending seamlessly with your favourite wet-flies on a wild loch. 