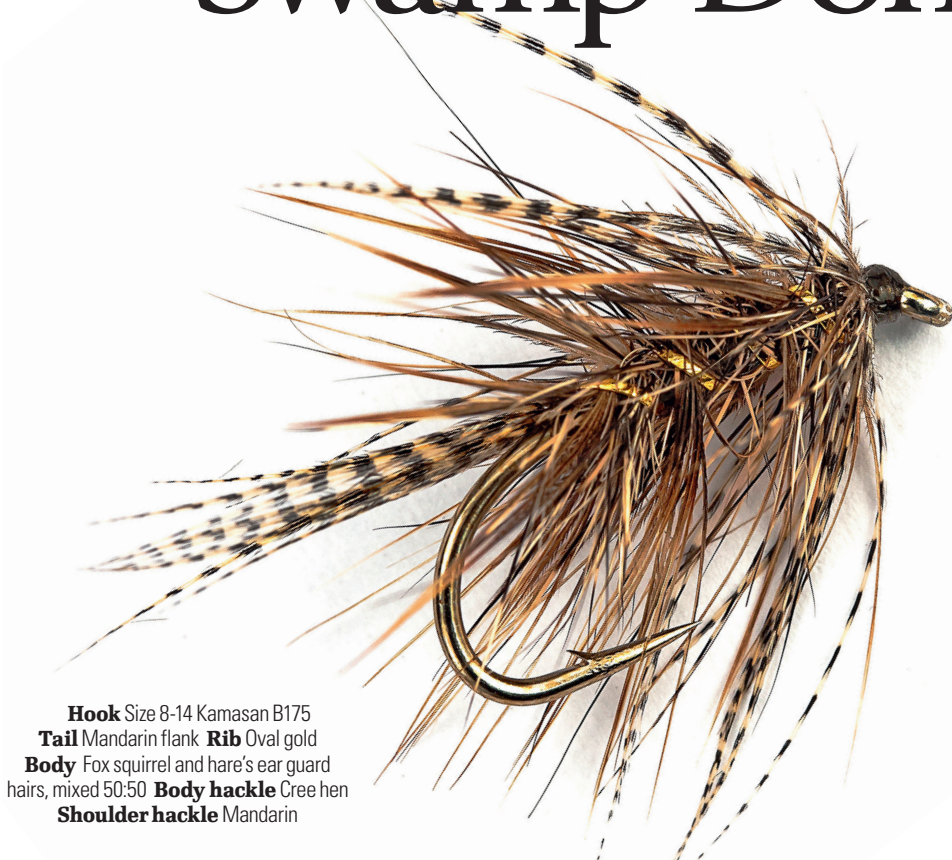


## Rob Denson's trout fly of the month

# Swamp Donkey



**Hook** Size 8-14 Kamasan B175  
**Tail** Mandarin flank **Rib** Oval gold  
**Body** Fox squirrel and hare's ear guard hairs, mixed 50:50 **Body hackle** Cree hen  
**Shoulder hackle** Mandarin



**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.

**L**ESS THAN charming," I feel, would be the verdict of the overwhelming majority were I to reveal the origins and the true meaning of the expression "Swamp Donkey". Fear not, and read on, as this month's fly and the reasons for its name are both innocent and wholesome, if a little less interesting.

I struggled with this month's choice, such are the options, both in terms of tactics and flies that the warmer, more settled weather heralds, albeit not always delivering. June is, more often than not, the May that we wanted, unless of course May was more like June, in which case June will be more like April.

The vagaries of the British summer apart, June can often serve up the cream of the season's fishing. Water temperatures have risen nicely, as have the land, and bite-sized fauna, both under

and over the water are on the move. The Swamp Donkey pretends to be many of them. As I'm sure you'll be aware by now, it's a bit of a theme with me, this "suggestive" business; why use five patterns to cover five creatures when one will do? Trout, being opportunistic feeders, tend not, when making that split-second decision whether to eat or starve, to hold out for a formal identification; and thus the Swamp Donkey becomes a hoglouse, a shrimp (in smaller sizes - 12 or 14), a Mayfly nymph or a poor, unfortunate terrestrial (in larger sizes - 10 or 8). The illusion, set against a plain, drab (hence donkey) backdrop, is complete when the imagination of the trout, ruled by its need to eat, runs riot. Despite the overtly drab appearance, by using materials that display many tones over a small area, such as mandarin, squirrel, and cree,

we can bring about the deception. Bars and stripes, speckles and spots not only look pretty and break the monotony, but crucially, by virtue of rapid transitions from light to dark, create the illusion of movement and life.

More and more these days, I find the flies that make it through one season, to be called up for the next, are simple, versatile affairs. Patterns for special situations, and flies that are deadly on their day are all well and good; the trouble is, I forget when that day is! The Swamp Donkey is firmly in the former category, and like many flies already in the squad, it ignores the rules and restrictions placed on those in the latter. In terms of light, being drab and natural, the Swamp Donkey works well in most situations, being most at home in good light, but bright or dark days are not a problem. The style of the fly and the kind of fishing it's intended for dictates the best lines: floaters and intermediates, although I have had good results up to and including a Di3. It's a similar story for leader position - pretty much anything goes. I would add, though, that I stick to sizes 12 and 14 on the tail and middle, and use the larger sizes on the bob, where it likes to be "swamped", in the film. Hold on tight.



### Tyingtips

- Don't forget to rake out the squirrel/hare's ear mix with the aid of a velcro brush, but be careful not to compromise the integrity of your palmer.
- Vary your colours and tones and contrasts slightly by substituting mallard, teal, grey squirrel, and various (drab) hackle colours.
- Tie in mandarin feather by tip - two turns.
- If you struggle dubbing the squirrel and hare's ear mix, add a small amount of underfur.
- For maximum "kick", ensure the length of the body hackle is at least one and a half times the hook gape, and don't be afraid to go to twice that length.

**"Why use five patterns to cover five creatures when one will do?"**