

Shrimpy Crippler

Try this leggy top-dropper on shallow wild waters, advises *Rob Denson*



Hook Size 8-12 Kamasan B175 or B170
Rib Oval gold **Body** Hare's ear and squirrel, 50:50 mix
Body hackle Grizzle hen dyed ginger
First shoulder hackle Mandarin flank **Second shoulder hackle** Grizzle hen dyed ginger **Thread** Brown-olive UTC 70 denier

TYING TIPS

- Be sure to use hen hackle – it makes a big difference, keeping things soft and fluid in the water, helping to create that all-important illusion of life.
- Adding the mandarin and getting it to look right can take practice, but there's no special technique to divulge: simply add slim slips, one by one, holding each slip in place with one turn of thread.
- As always, raking out the body with velcro adds "buzz" to the fly.


deception, heads to the depths ... and my rod bends.

The deception begins with a fly. In a good blow, legs and lengthy hackles are often the order of the day. Their benefits are two-fold. Firstly, visibility. Classic loch-styling is surface-based and in big waves and brooding light, we need to be able to track a fly as it rides the peaks and troughs. A fish can come at any moment, from the second the fly hits the water, to the last split-second as you lift it to re-cast. Don't worry about the trout spotting the fly – they'll see it well enough. Rough water does little to hide it from the trout's view. Its large, leggy profile helps at the last moment, though, reducing the chance of your offering getting lost in the chaos.

Secondly, when carefully tied, with the right materials, such as long hackles, large flies can give lots of seductive movement, and when a trout has only a second or two to make a decision, the illusion of life can be the factor that seals the deal.

The Shrimpy Crippler is such a fly.

It was originally tied and fished on a size 12 when news of the killer shrimp infestation at Grafham Water broke. On the two occasions that I fished it at Grafham – on sinking lines – it was spectacularly unsuccessful. Better results came on shallow, shrimp-holding, wild brown trout waters like Malham Tarn and the Orkney lochs. However, scaling things up to size 10 and 8 was a revelation. Fish were now cartwheeling out of the spray to take it. Fished on a floater or slow intermediate in the top few inches, it was now all about presence and movement, and drab something-and-nothing colours – a recurring theme in my favourite and most effective patterns. The shrimpiness became an irrelevance, but the name stuck.

The Shrimpy Crippler has been a first-choice top-dropper for the best part of a decade now, working superbly for wild fish on wild and windy days. But I have a funny feeling ... it might also make a decent bonefish pattern. 



ROB DENSON

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FLY-FISHING IS A BROAD church and rapidly getting broader as new opportunities for different species, locations and techniques are made available almost every day. If time and resources were unlimited, I'd be up for most of them; sadly, bonefishing on Christmas Island or a two-month Taimen odyssey are luxuries that for me at least would necessitate a diligent ten-year savings plan, or, if I'm impatient, selling a kidney on eBay. Unfortunately, I'm rubbish at saving and I haven't finished with my kidneys yet. Lucky for me, then, that the biggest thrill in fly-fishing costs peanuts and is on most of our doorsteps: classic loch-style fishing in a big wave.

After years of reading about it as a kid, the simplicity and purity of casting a short line while drifting broadside, back to the wind, is the reason I started fly-fishing. More than 30 years later, still nothing thrills me more than seeing that flash of gold under my rod tip as a wild brown trout rides the wave then turns with my fly in its scissors, having miraculously plucked it from the swirling foam. The trout, blissfully unaware of the