

# The Snatcher

*Rob Denson ties a fly originally designed for Leven buzzer-feeders*

**Hook** Size 8-16 Kamasan B100 **Thread** Black  
**Rib** Silver wire **Body** Mirage tinsel **Body hackle**  
 Black cock **Thorax** Squirrel/hare's ear mix -  
 50/50, and a pinch of pearl ice dub **Cheeks**  
 Jungle cock **Shoulder hackle** Black hen

rest - suggesting the chironomid in the early to mid stages of its life-cycle. The format worked a treat, and still does today, particularly in the first half of the season. But what of the latter stages of the buzzer's life-cycle, and the latter half of the season? Trout will feed voraciously on the emergent and pre-emergent stages of the chironomid, too, and right through the season. This is where the Snatcher came in and carved a previously and largely ignored niche. Rocket science it ain't, but sometimes the simplest of ideas are the longest overlooked.

I believe the prototype Snatchers were adapted from shop-bought Shrimp patterns. Initial tests went well, further development quickly leading to a deceptively simple but hugely effective formula - a light, curved hook, lean body, and a sparse palmer. The originals were pretty much exclusively seal's fur bodied affairs, lightly dubbed to keep the profile slim, and varied in shade to match the predominant buzzer hatch. The key feature, though, that facilitates the fly's slow progress through the water column is the sparse body hackle - too little, and its progress through the identified feeding zone is too quick. Too much hackle, and it becomes, well... a palmered wet-fly on a curved hook! A few open turns of hackle is the masterstroke, allowing the Snatcher to hold in the film for a moment or two, tempting any surface-feeders, before beginning a slow but purposeful journey through the upper layers.

Tinsel, mylar and holographic variants inevitably followed, illustrated here by one of my own adaptations. The basic formula, however - light and lean - remains the same, and it works. If you buy your flies, ignore any Snatchers that do indeed look like "a palmered wet-fly on a curved hook" (palmered wet-flies on straight hooks do a perfectly good job of being palmered wet-flies), and opt for those that look as though the tyer was on a budget and running low on cock hackles.

## TYING TIP

THE KEY tip for tying the Snatcher is in preparing your body hackle: strip all the barbs from one side of the stalk, leaving you effectively with half a hackle. Tie in, bare side down, then, depending on the density of the barbs, make between four and six open turns from the eye towards the rear, then secure with the rib, as per usual palmering procedure. See how it looks. Too busy? Fewer turns.

WHEN TYING seal's fur versions, keep them as slim as possible. Pick out the fur slightly for a little extra "buzz".



**I** OFTEN SEE and hear newcomers to fly-fishing getting their knickers awfully twisted when it comes to identifying fly patterns. Sure, categorising flies into wet-flies, dry-flies, lures and so on can be helpful, and names do have their uses when the Sooty Olive or Silver Invicta are doing the damage on your water. Names can be inspiring, beautiful and evocative, too, but sometimes they're just downright silly and random, as you'll surely have noticed if you're a regular reader of this page!

But none of this is of any real importance. What is important is gaining a clear understanding of exactly why pattern "X" belongs in category "A", and what that fly, through its size, design, use of materials and use of colour, is setting out to achieve. All the above comes with time and experience, but the sooner one learns to look at flies for what they are, and not what they're called, the better. And remember - so far as I'm aware, trout don't read!

The Snatcher is a case in point, which the following oft-heard remark illustrates: "It's just a palmered wet-fly on a curved hook, isn't it?" Well, no, it isn't. The comment, however glib, shows an overeagerness to categorise and a lack of insight. A closer look, and a few moments' thought, reveal the true credentials of the Snatcher...

Originated in the early '90s by Loch Leven regulars Dave Wallace, Michael Wilson and Francie Jarret, the Snatcher was developed as a buzzer pattern, with a particular aim in mind - keeping a simple buzzer profile high in the water. Slim, fast-sinking Buzzers, which are now a stock item in every stillwater angler's box, were taken care of a few years earlier. Superglue and multi-coated varnished patterns got down to the fish quickly, with the size, shape and colour doing the



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