

Rob Denson's trout fly of the month

Hackled Cormorant

Hook Size 10-12 Fulling Mill
31531 Black Nickel or
Kamasan B175
Thread Black
Body Black/silver
micro straggle
Wing Black marabou
Hackle Black hen hackle
Cheeks Jungle cock
(optional)



Rob Denson
has fly-fished for
trout for 25 years,
visiting all four
corners of Britain
and Ireland,
combining his
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IT'S MARCH at last, and, temperatures permitting, I'm highly likely to invert my wellies, bang them against a wall, slip them on and venture forth. I'm also highly likely to fish a Cormorant. I like Cormorants. Trout have always liked Cormorants - but I haven't. They were incredibly effective when they first came on to the scene. They were incredibly popular, too. That's why I didn't like them - well, that, and an element of stubbornness. There seemed little point in wasting time proving a pattern's worth when half the stillwater community in Britain were doing it for you. It'll keep, I thought. And keep it did.

I'm sure you're all *au fait* with Cormorants by now. However, I just wanted to share with you a simple, if a little obvious but nevertheless worthwhile, tweak - the addition of a hackle. The original Cormorant consists of just two main elements - body and wing - which comprise peacock herl and marabou respectively. A simpler, more

versatile pattern you'll struggle to find, and such is the scope for the tying and the fishing of this deadly little fly that there are a great deal many more days than not when a Cormorant of some description will do a job for you. It pays to keep it simple, though, and to remember that its simplicity is its greatest weapon. Trout want to see food, and their fondest desires - buzzers, fry, nymphs etc - are projected on to the very suggestive framework of the Cormorant. To overdo it is to give the trout a reason to refuse it.

After all this talk of simplicity, I'm going to have to put a good case forward for the addition of this hackle! Movement. That's my case. Cormorants can be fished effectively at practically any speed, depending upon the conditions and what the fish want. That versatility is another of their major strengths. It struck me, though, during an early-season session several years ago, as I tried to imagine exactly how my Cormorant was behaving, fished at a snail's pace that

"painfully slow" is perfect for bringing the best out of marabou. The faster we pull a fly, the less movement we get from marabou, and other furs and feathers. The pressure and pace of the water over the material holds everything down, tight and still.

Slow is the way forward, then, for maximising movement. Painfully slow is perfect for hen hackles, too, albeit the movement is very different from marabou: a buggy, creepy-crawl as opposed to marabou's wave-and-pulse. It's worth mentioning that many people favour the tips of the tips of the marabou - that is, the ends of the uppermost fibres of the plume for the Cormorant wing. I am not one of those people. I prefer a little substance to my Cormorant wing, selected from the middle of the plume, where the feather has a little more body. It's still not a bulky wing, by any means, but the structure of the feather is such that it is able to catch a little more movement of water. The addition of the hackle is quite a subtle tweak. We're not complicating things for the sake of it. Also, I think it bridges that gap between Cormorant and wet-fly nicely.

The body of the Cormorant, like the wing, should be kept slim and simple, too. Be it herl, fur, quill or tinsel, whatever you choose, try to make it "harmonise" with the wing. Better a fly of balanced proportions and tones than something ungainly and garish. A well-designed Cormorant, like all flies, should be much more than the sum of its parts.

This month's fly has proved a real winner in recent years, especially in early season. The body is one of my favourite modern synthetics - black/silver micro straggle. Black and silver will work anywhere, any time, and particularly well under dull early-spring skies. Find the fish and work your cormorants slowly. Try three on a cast - black/silver, black/gold and black/red. You'll do well not to catch trout.

TYING TIPS

■ This version is tied on a heavy hook, but I use lighter hooks for fishing higher and slower.

■ Keep it lean - two turns of hen are plenty.

■ Jungle cock is optional. This fly works really well with or without. It's a nice touch, though, when fry are about.



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