

FLIES FOR FRY-TIME

Rob Denson selects his favourite patterns for fry-feeding brown and rainbow trout in UK stillwaters



▼ 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. Website: www.robdenson.co.uk

AS THE nights draw shorter, and another season slips away, the residents of our lochs and reservoirs can at last take a well-earned break from our attentions... for a while at least.

But first, trout must pack on weight for the long, lean winter ahead; rainbows and browns everywhere will have fry fever!

On fertile lowland reservoirs and lochs, coarse fish fry will provide the bulk of the protein for the binge. On upland waters and lochs, small fish and indeed small trout will draw unwanted attention. Catching fry-feeders though, isn't always as simple as pulling a huge shiny lure through the depths. The size and colour of fry can vary greatly, depending on venue and time of year, as can the tactics employed by the trout to hunt them. As always, observation is the key, and then selecting a suitable approach and flies.

Naturally, with fry spending much of their time in shallow water, and close to the sanctuary of weed, the bank angler can reap great rewards. Boat anglers are far from sidelined though, and

can reach the far-flung areas that bank anglers cannot, and as with waters like Chew, shallow, weedy water isn't always close to the shore.

Bank or boat, look for the tell-tale signs of fry-feeding activity: disturbances in the weedbeds, the "fizz" of tiny fry boiling in the surface layers as they try to escape death, and the crashing and splashing of trout. Look also for stunned and dead fry on the surface and opportunistic birds. When, based on evidence, you find your mark, choose your method and your flies accordingly, and be prepared for a battle. Strong line and a stronger heart are essentials, as fry-feeders can be big, scarily aggressive and adept at leading you a merry dance through the weed.

From the bank, a single fly is usually a wise decision, eliminating the potential snag hazard of droppers, and maximising the strength of your cast. When prospecting on the boats, with clear, deeper water between you and the trout, a two- or three-fly cast is usually quite safe.

Here is a small, simple, selection of flies that have served me well over the years, and should cover you for most eventualities.

Suspender Fry

An option for the stunned/dead fry scenario, this fly hangs, much like a Suspender Buzzer, below the foam. Leave it static, as with the Floating Fry, then twitch it back, with occasional pulls. The buoyant foam head and submerged body work together to cause maximum disturbance, like a struggling fry. Try it in a team of two or even three flies from a boat, either on the top dropper, attracting fish to the flies below, or on the tail for a washing-line set-up.

Hook Size 8-10 Kamasan B170 or 175
Body Pearl Ice Dub **Wing** Any long, soft fur, tied in bunches, "Hog" style **Head** White Booby foam



Pearly Cormorant

One of my favourite small fry patterns, the Pearly Cormorant earned its spurs at Rutland Water in 2009, and has been a great performer ever since. The single layer of varnished white thread takes the edge off the Mirage underneath giving a muted, but fishy glint. The mixed marabou wing provides a few more fishy tones. A good pattern fished in a team from a boat (middle dropper) or singly from the bank.

Hook Size 10-12 Kamasan B175 **Body** Mirage covered with one layer of white UTC thread, then varnished **Wing** Mixed marabou - white and golden olive **Cheeks** Jungle cock **Hackle** Pale hen **Thread** White



Ice-Dub Dabblers

The Dabblers profile seems to spellbind fish everywhere, whatever the format, and the Ice-Dub Dabblers is no exception. A great general suggestion of fry/small fish of all denominations, it has tempted many fine back-end browns and rainbows on waters as diverse as Bewl, Rutland, Malham Tarn and Loch Watten. Another pattern most at home in a team, fished from a boat. Works well on most lines and in any position, fitting in, and complementing its team members well.

Hook Size 8-12 Kamasan B175
Tail Bronze mallard **Rib** Silver wire
Body Pearl Ice Dub **Hackle** Grizzle hen
Cloak Bronze mallard **Cheeks** Jungle cock
Thread White



Straggles

A real meaty mouthful, suggestive of small browns and darker fry such as perch. A favourite of mine when targeting wild browns in upland and coloured water at the back-end, but works equally well on the reservoirs for rainbows. Perfect as a single fly from the bank, or in a team from a boat, fished on the tail: try the Ice-Dub Dabblers on the top and Pearly Cormorant in the middle.

Hook Size 8-10 Kamasan B175 **Body** Black and gold straggles **Wing** Hare or rabbit strip **Hackle** Grizzle hen dyed ginger **Cheeks** Jungle cock **Thread** Black



Minkie Booby

A simple but very effective version of the ever-popular Minkie Booby, given to me by George Barron. Supremely versatile and useful from boat or bank, fished singly or, like the Suspender Fry, top or tail in conjunction with a team. Can be used as a floating fly, too, but is at its best on a sinking line to exploit the movement of the mink.

Hook Size 8-12 Kamasan B170 or 175
Wing Natural mink **Eyes** Shaped Booby foam
Shoulder hackle Two turns of white/silver and UV microfritz **Thread** White



Floating Fry

Dead simple. The Floating Fry does what it says on the tin - floats, and to all intents and purposes, is best fished exactly as you would a dry-fly. When trout corral fry to the surface, crashing through them at speed, the dead or stunned casualties will float, and are then picked off at leisure. Pitch a single Floating Fry into the melee and be ready for a fight. Match the fly size to the fry size.

Hook Size 8-12 Kamasan B170 or 175
Body Pearl Ice Dub **Back** White foam secured at the bend and head **Thread** White

