

Hair-wing Adams

*Born on a river, tweaked for the lochs, tied by **Rob Denson***

Hook Size 10 or 12 Kamasan B175 or B170
Tail Red and ginger cock hackle fibres
Rib Gold wire or oval
Body Squirrel underfur
Body hackle Dyed-ginger grizzle hen
Wing Grey squirrel
Cheeks Jungle-cock splits
Thread Black



TYING TIPS

Keep the wing sparse — you'll get more movement and translucency, and a better hook-hold. The thicker the bunch, the tighter you must tie it in. It can get to a point where you won't secure the innermost fibres; they'll eventually drop out, and the rest of the wing soon follows. Tying in two very slim bunches can help, one on top of the other, as does brushing out the underfur before tying in.



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UNASSUMING, MODEST, nondescript: when it comes to the superstars of the trout fly world these attributes crop up time and again. I'm talking about a fraction of a fraction of the most successful flies ever devised: Griffith's Gnat, Hare's Ear, DHE, Black and Peacock Spider, Shipman's Buzzer, and, of course, the Adams — all cold, calculating, natural-born killers, yet you'd struggle to pick them out in a line-up.

It's their subtlety and simplicity that invites hungry trout to project their wildest food fantasies on to their blank canvas — always a more effective approach than overloading a fly with a riot of detail and colour.

It's almost 100 years since Mr Leonard Halliday of Mayfield, Michigan, devised the Adams. Legend has it that Halliday's holidaying friend, Charles Adams, had asked Halliday to tie him something vaguely upwinged in nature for use on local rivers that had prolific upwing hatches. Unaware that his place in fly-fishing lore was about to be sealed, Halliday set to work and duly obliged. Mr Adams unleashed the new creation on the nearby Boardman River and, by all accounts, did rather well. Halliday had produced a truly beautiful, understated little number with exceptional fish-catching powers. The rest is history.

The Adams still has many adherents and a great many variants, one of the best being the parachute version. The pattern has also crossed over to stillwaters where fans of the Para Adams are legion. So who but a fool would use the Adams as a template for a new wet-fly?

Hold my beer.

A good 20 years ago I came across a hair-wing version of one of my all-time favourite wet-flies — the Silver Invicta. As beautiful and inspiring as the traditional winged version is, the translucency and movement provided by a hair wing, for my money, gives it the edge. As a bonus, it's also more durable, not to mention easier to tie. With the hair-wing bee in my bonnet, as it were, I set about furnishing other classic wet-flies with a hair wing, as well as creating a few of my own. Around ten years ago I was tying a few Para Adams for the box when it struck me that the colour scheme might translate rather well to a wet-fly, topped off, of course, with a hair wing.

The result was exactly what I was looking for: a partner-in-crime for subdued natural-looking flies such as the Harry Tom, Sooty Olive and my own Swamp Donkey.

Flies of this ilk can be worth their weight in gold when conditions are benign — settled, light winds, good, overcast light, and comfortable temperatures. Not that fishing is always easy under these conditions, but the chances are that fish will be feeding, therefore subtlety and vague suggestion often get the desired response. A team of three similar flies to the aforementioned quiet fellas, fished stealthily on an intermediate has often done well for me, with the Hair-wing Adams usually slotting comfortably into the middle-dropper position.

The nondescript nature of flies like this usually means they travel well, too, working on all manner of waters; indeed, the Hair-wing Adams has over the years been productive on the Orkney lochs, upland and lowland lochs and reservoirs, and as far away and as far south as Michigan and Bewl. 