

SEAL'S FUR BLACK PENNELL

Rob Denson praises a classic buzzer pattern that will perform in every position on your cast

RUMMAGING THROUGH fly-boxes can throw up happy memories and provide just the antidote for bleak winter days. Many of the inhabitants of my boxes have heart-warming tales to tell and, thanks to their fish-catching credentials, have held their place for nearly 30 years. One such is the Seal's Fur Black Pennell.

Mr H. Cholmondeley Pennell's original, or at least something close to it (I believe the original called for cock hackle and a wisp of golden pheasant topping over the tippet) has also stood its ground. This standard is one hell of a fly: slim, sleek, segmented and simple, it's a buzzer pattern, and a damn good one. Yet people seem to struggle to see it for what it is. They are often unsure how to dress it, and when, where and how to fish it.

Sure, for out-and-out static and straight-line buzzer fishing, we have moved on. Dr Bell's Buzzer paved the way and the rest - quill, herl, epoxy and Spanflex - is history. What we have in the Black Pennell is a simple and highly successful, general buzzer suggestion: tie it to your cast and pull it through the upper layers. Today

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they call flies like this “pulling Buzzers”; 150 years ago, Mr Cholmondeley P called it the Black Pennell.

The palmered seal's fur version is a useful addition to any fly-box and complements the standard dressing nicely. It can also complement the standard very nicely on the cast. For me, the standard is a little limited; its spiritual home is the tail position. It's a slim fly, performing best in smaller (12, 14) sizes, and is therefore a fly for fishing relatively slowly. It's ideally suited to classic loch-style, or being stroked back in conjunction with more modern flies and techniques.

The seal's fur version is more than happy to do a day's work in any position, depending on conditions, and the size, style and colours of its teammates. The



Hook Size 10-14 Kamasan B170 or B175 **Tail** Golden pheasant tippets **Rib** Flat silver **Body** Black seal's fur **Body hackle** Black hen **Head hackle** Black Hen



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extra bulk and “buzz” of the seal's fur and the addition of the body hackle make it an obvious choice for the top dropper, and fished in conjunction with the standard on the tail, has scored well for me on many occasions. With its wider, flat-tinsel rib providing extra flash and attraction, it's well suited to the middle. Drop it down to the tail if you want something to stay higher for a little longer.

Tiny tweaks, big benefits. **T&S**

TYING TIPS

- For that little extra bulk and “buzz”, rake out the seal's fur with velcro.
- Cock hackle is fine, but hen is better for movement. Whichever you choose, keep the hackle sparse - three or four turns on the body, two or three at the head.
- Tie on medium-gauge (B170) hooks for top and middle droppers and heavy-gauge (B175) hooks for the tail position.