



The Storr May

Rob Denson ties a seductive fry pattern for wild brownies



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: robdenson.co.uk

WITH THE WILD brown trout season almost upon us, it is with almost immeasurable excitement that I look forward to getting afloat on Malham Tarn. This will be my 29th season, and over the last 16 years Malham has established itself comfortably in the upper echelons of the UK and Ireland's best wild brown trout fisheries. "Best" is a big word and one I am loath to apply to anything, let alone something as subjective as my idea of Heaven; but I am yet to fish better.

The funny thing is, brown trout shouldn't even be there. Mother Nature created as perfect a stillwater wild brown trout habitat as can be found anywhere – but forgot to add the trout. That wasn't done until the 12th Century when the Cistercian monks of nearby Fountains Abbey stocked and regularly harvested the tarn. Almost 1,000 years and many changes in rules and stocking policy later, the tarn is now 100 per cent wild brown trout and, since 2002, strictly catch-and-release. This is where things get interesting: since catch-and-release was

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implemented the upper size limit of each season's best few fish has steadily grown. The last two or three seasons have produced many fish of between 7lb and 9lb, then in 2017 along came, to the best of my knowledge, Malham's all-time record: a beast of 9lb 4oz captured by local angler Steve Smalley (December 2017, *T&S*). This season I fully expect to hear of a double-figure fish. I doubt it will be me that hooks it, but as they say, you have to be in it to win it, and Matt Eastham's Storr May will be on my A-list.

Matt originally tied the Storr May for a trip we made to fish the Storr lochs on Skye in 2012. The plan was to land on Loch Leathan – the larger of the two Storr lochs – at peak mayfly time and fool

prodigious numbers of wild fish on our respective specials that had been tied for the trip. The mayfly were there in force and we both caught well. What we hadn't bargained for was the paucity of wild fish and the abundance of stocked fish of dubious quality. Lesson learned: do more research before putting in a six-hour drive.

Anyway, as is so often the case, the true calling of a fly can be far beyond the original concept, and I had a gut feeling that the Storr May was destined for greater things. Let me tell you, despite Malham's lack of mayfly, Matt's pattern has gone down with considerable aplomb. Every inch a small perch fry, of which Malham is stuffed, it's not a bad impersonator of a brown trout fry either, which is handy as I've noticed over the years that many of Malham's better fish fall to similar patterns – vaguely fishy with a little flash – and I suspect the piscivorous leanings of Malham's larger residents has more than a little to do with it. The manner in which the Storr May is taken when fished with a steady medium-paced retrieve would appear to bear this out.

When I fish the Storr May on Malham this season it will probably be on an intermediate or Di3 line, positioned on the tail or the middle dropper in order to get below the surface and fishing quickly. I'll vary the retrieve from a slow figure of eight to long steady pulls. The marabou wing ensures plenty of seductive movement at slower speeds, and seems to be more effective than when stripped at pace. *T&S*



Hook Size 8-12 Kamasan B130 **Tail** Bronze mallard
Rib Black wire **Body** Flat gold
Body hackle Grizzle hen dyed olive
Wing Mixed marabou – black, olive, dark olive
Shoulder hackle Black or dark olive hen
Thread Black or brown-olive UTC 70 Den

TYING TIPS

- Mix the marabou colours in hand before tying in the wing. Use two or three bunches of each colour.
- Tie the shoulder hackle in last, over the wing.