



CRIPPLED GOAT

Few trophy trout can resist the charm of Rob Denson's leggy wet-fly

MATERIALS

Hook Size 8-12 Kamasan B175
Thread UTC 70, wine **Butt** Flat gold
Tail Golden pheasant topping **Rib** Oval gold
Body Magenta seal's fur **Body hackles** Claret hen, then magenta hen **Shoulder hackle 1** Red golden-pheasant body feather **Shoulder hackle 2** Grizzle hen dyed "Silver Doctor blue"

IF YOU HAD BIG PLANS IN 2020, CHANCES are they went down like a knackered lift. I was due to arrive at the bottom of the Great Glen in the first week of April to fish the fabled lochs Arkaig and Lochy under the tutelage of local expert Arthur MacDonald, when Boris pulled the rug and the estates pulled the boats off the water. And that, as they say, was that. The lochs will still be there, though, when we're good to go again, and my flies will be ready.

Lochy and Arkaig throw up monstrous fish each season, and Arthur, like any host worth their salt, was insistent that my name was on one of them. I bought right into Arthur's prophecy and spent a chunk of the winter tying flies to tempt that fish of a lifetime. First on the list was the Crippled Goat — an easy choice, even though to the best of my knowledge it has only ever accounted for a handful

of fish. So why was it first on the team-sheet? Well, the fish it has accounted for were wild browns of 5lb, 6lb and 15lb, plus a couple of more modest fish.

The 15-pounder was the first of the Crippled Goat's victims, only a matter of days after its creation in spring 2016. My fishy friends Stuart Minikin and Matt Eastham were heading to Arkaig, and Stuart asked me to knock him up a few patterns. They were fishing with local guide Mark Hirst, whose Stone Goat is a must-have pattern for any trophy hunt to those parts and has been building a reputation for wild fish on many other waters.

I tied the flies Stuart requested, then knocked up a couple of "luxury" patterns for good measure, borrowing the Stone Goat's colour scheme and basic design, then giving it the Crippler treatment. Cripplers are a series of leggy wet-flies I devised several years ago, characterised by a long shoulder

TYING TIPS

- Tie the two body hackles in together. They should be an identical size. Tie in the bottom of the feathers, then grip the tips with hackle pliers and wind them towards the fly's tail.
- Strip the lower third/half of fibres from the golden pheasant feather. Hold half a dozen fibres at the tip and stroke back the fibres in the central portion of the feather to 90 degrees from the stalk. Trim the tip fibres to a manageable length, tie in behind the eye and wind one full turn. Stroke the fibres slightly back towards the tail and tie off.

hackle of golden-pheasant body feather. Hot off the vice, the Crippled Goat looked every inch a last hope, when-all-else-fails type of fly.

A few days later and Stuart was the toast of social media and the fly-fishing community in general as news and pictures of his capture did the rounds. The Arkaig leviathan had fallen to the charms of the Crippled Goat just a few short yards from the shore on an intermediate line.

I was emboldened after Stuart's success to give the Crippled Goat some leader time on my favourite wild brown trout water, Malham Tarn. I've fished it a few times in the last four or five seasons when it felt "right", and it's accounted for a handful of fish, the best, as I mentioned earlier, were 5lb and 6lb. It's incredible how often flies like this tempt big, wild fish. Maybe we should fish patterns like this right from the off and more often. To paraphrase Mr Stan Headley, sometimes they just want pizza. ■

TIE THE CRIPPLED GOAT



1 Run the thread down the shank, taking it well round the bend. Catch in a length of flat gold tinsel that's been cut to a point, then apply in touching turns.



2 Secure and trim off the end of the tinsel then catch in a golden pheasant topping. At the same point, catch in a length of fine oval gold tinsel.



3 Fix the waste ends of the tinsel and topping along the shank then dub on a pinch of magenta seal's fur. Apply close turns of the dubbed fur.



4 Having formed the body, catch in equal-sized hen hackles — one claret, one magenta. Hold the feathers by their tips and apply evenly spaced turns.



5 When the hackles have reached the base of the tail, take hold of the gold tinsel and wind it towards the eye, locking the hackles in place.



6 Secure the end of the tinsel, then trim off the waste, and the hackle tips. Catch in a dyed-red golden-pheasant body feather by its tip, and apply a single turn.



7 Stroke the golden-pheasant hackle fibres over the body, then trim off the waste. Catch in a dyed-blue grizzle hen hackle and wind on a full turn.



8 Secure the hackle tip, trim off the excess, then build a small head. Finally, cast off the tying thread with a secure whip finish.