

Miller's May

Yes, it's a sedge pattern, but it will imitate another fly, too, says **Rob Denson**



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CAST YOUR MIND back to Saturday, May 18, 1991. Struggling? Let me help: Paul Gascoigne lays down the blueprint for Mixed Martial Arts, scything down Nottingham Forest's Gary Parker and Gary Charles in the opening 15 minutes of the FA Cup Final. Unfortunately for Gazza, the cruciate ligament in his right knee was decidedly less tolerant of the latter lunge than the referee. I missed the live action, catching the gruesomely spectacular highlights later that evening in the bar of the Pontoon Bridge Hotel. This was my first trip to Ireland, and Saturday, May 18, 1991 had been my first day afloat on County Mayo's most resplendent of all its jewels, Lough Conn.

We were there for the mayfly; yes, in Ireland, they hatch in May. In the fortnight running up to our trip, fevered with excitement, I phoned the Pontoon Bridge on what seemed like a daily basis for updates on the hatch. "Colossal clouds of dancing duns engulf each and every watercourse from dawn till dusk. Ten-pound trout leap 10 ft clear of the water and snatch your artificial on your back-cast ..." They only told me what I wanted to hear. Porkies aside, when you eventually get there, the real Ireland, her people and her fishing are the stuff of fairy tales.

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We made the annual pilgrimage for a few seasons more, and from that very first day on Conn, to our last in '94, my best mayfly was a sedge. The magazine article from whence it came, if memory serves, called it the Miller's Sedge. A lack of appropriate materials, not to mention the requisite tying skills meant I ended up with something completely different. Not to worry ... we had also been told that biblical swarms of sedges the size of your big toe would whip the trout into a feeding frenzy, and any old sedge would do. I never got to try it on the sedge-feeders: gillies that knock off at 6 pm seeking sanctuary in the bar (and us joining them) put paid to the romantic idyll.

But boatmen do have their uses, and it was a Mr Michael Connolly of Pontoon Bridge, who, after a less-than-hectic start to that first day remarked that "the colossal clouds of fly and the leaping trout must be at the other end of the lough". Minutes later, more keen wit as Michael noticed my Miller's Sedge and declared it was a great-looking mayfly. Maybe Michael was of Welsh descent? Anyway, on it went - tail position, as instructed - and was met with whole-hearted approval by the trout. In my pre-trip fever, I had neglected wet mayflies for the tail position, concentrating on Fanwings, spinners, Wulfs and Bumbles. In the absence of a carpet of mayfly and cartwheeling trout, the "sedge" did the bulk of the damage, fished classic loch-style on the tail, pulling fish after fish for the rest of the day ... and the week. It has continued to do the same sterling job for me for 25 years, on waters as diverse as the Lake of Menteith, Fewston, and the Storr lochs.

It's a dull, drab, dour affair, but then so are mayflies and their nymphs. In this respect it's perfect for suggesting drowned fly and, in particular, nymphs, fished well below the surface when things are slow and fly are scarce up top. Give it a swim for mayfly-feeders this season - on the middle or tail, floater or intermediate, short-lined - and I think you'll find that this sedge is indeed a great mayfly. Thank you, Mr Miller, whoever you are. I changed the pattern and its use slightly over the years, so I hope you don't mind that I changed its name. **T&S**



Hook Size 8-10 Kamasan B175 or 170 **Thread** Tan UTC 70
Tail Hen pheasant centre tail **Rib** Oval gold **Body** Hare's ear
Body hackle Any drab hen (cree, furnace, badger) **Wing** Hen pheasant centre tail **Shoulder hackle** Drab hen or brown partridge

TYING TIPS

■ Don't be overly concerned with the choice of materials or tying a "show" fly. The style and "feel" of the fly, and its proportions, are more important than exact shades and perfect tying.