

{ MATERIAL OF THE MONTH }

# PUTTING ON THE GLITZ

Rob Denson uses tinsel to add strength, bling and colour to a variety of fly patterns



**TINSEL IS ONE OF THOSE MUST-HAVE** materials. But with a mind-boggling array to choose from, where on earth do you start? Firstly, you need to distinguish between flat tinsel and oval tinsel: self-explanatory to experienced tyers, but novices will need clarification.

Flat tinsel comes in very thin, long, flat lengths, spooled in varying widths. The most common use for flat tinsel is to wrap it around the hook shank to form the body of the fly; wire or oval tinsel is then wrapped over the flat tinsel to protect it. Oval, at first glance, appears more like wire, but is constructed from ultra-fine flat tinsel wound around a supple central core. It's also used more like wire — for protecting and holding in place the materials over which it is wound, such as body hackles, dubbing, or flat tinsel.

Both flat and oval can provide structural integrity as well as more cosmetic benefits such as suggesting segmentation, providing “bling” and introducing an extra colour or two. The choice of colours, finishes, sizes and brands can be bewildering, but fear not, just a handful will facilitate the tying of more flies than you could ever imagine.

PHOTOGRAPHY: ROB DENSON



## KATE DABBLER

The indispensable Uni dual Mylar — gold on one side, silver on the other — adorns a million-and-one trout, salmon, grayling and saltwater flies. Usually used to form simple, flat bodies for wet-flies and nymphs, this Kate Dabbling uses it as an eye-catching wide rib, contrasting beautifully with the black seal's fur and holding the body hackle firmly in place.



## SIMPLE PALMER

Not only does Mirage (flat) tinsel shimmer like nothing else, but it also has a rather neat trick up its sleeve: it is semi-transparent, allowing the colour of the thread base beneath it to show through. Opal or pearl Mirage is an absolute must for any tyer, but this Simple Palmer uses Semperfli's orange Mirage over a base of fluorescent peach thread to dramatic effect.



## HARE'S EAR NYMPH

Another great way to make use of flat tinsel is by adding a “flashback” to nymphs, Buzzers and emergers. Instead of winding the tinsel, simply lay it along the body and protect with a wire rib. Get creative with holographic, Mirage or just plain old silver or gold. This Hare's Ear Nymph is paired with opal Mirage; another classic, irresistible combination.

## BUZZER

It's not all flat or oval. Semperfli's Micro Glint tinsel cleverly merges the two and meets somewhere in the middle, proving that some modern innovations are worth having. I chose the pearl version to add segmentation and suggest trapped gas in this simple Hare's Ear Buzzer.



## CRUNCHER

Here we have flat tinsel, double layered by winding down the shank then back up again to form the body, which is then protected with wire. It's the base for countless flies of all types. This Cruncher matches a red holographic tinsel body and thorax cover with gold wire, ginger hackle and tail — a classic and very effective combination. ■



## ROB DENSON

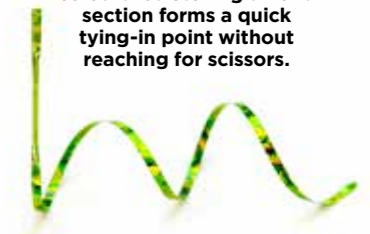
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## TINSEL TIPS

If any of these six tinsels went out of production, my world would end! All other colours are simply a luxury. Clockwise from top-left: gold holographic, gold oval, red holographic, dual Mylar (silver/gold), opal Mirage, silver oval.



Most modern tinsels can be easily stretched, which helps ensure a tight, secure finish to your tinsel bodies, thorax covers and so on. Pull the tinsel to the point of breaking when tying off. Be aware, though, that stretching too far will distort the colours. Stretching an end section forms a quick tying-in point without reaching for scissors.



When using a wire rib over tinsel (or any other underlying body material), tie the rib the full length of the shank. This gives a flat, level base rather than a series of unsightly steps. It makes the fly more aesthetically pleasing, and is much quicker and easier to tie. Always counterwind the rib (wind in the opposite direction to the tinsel).

