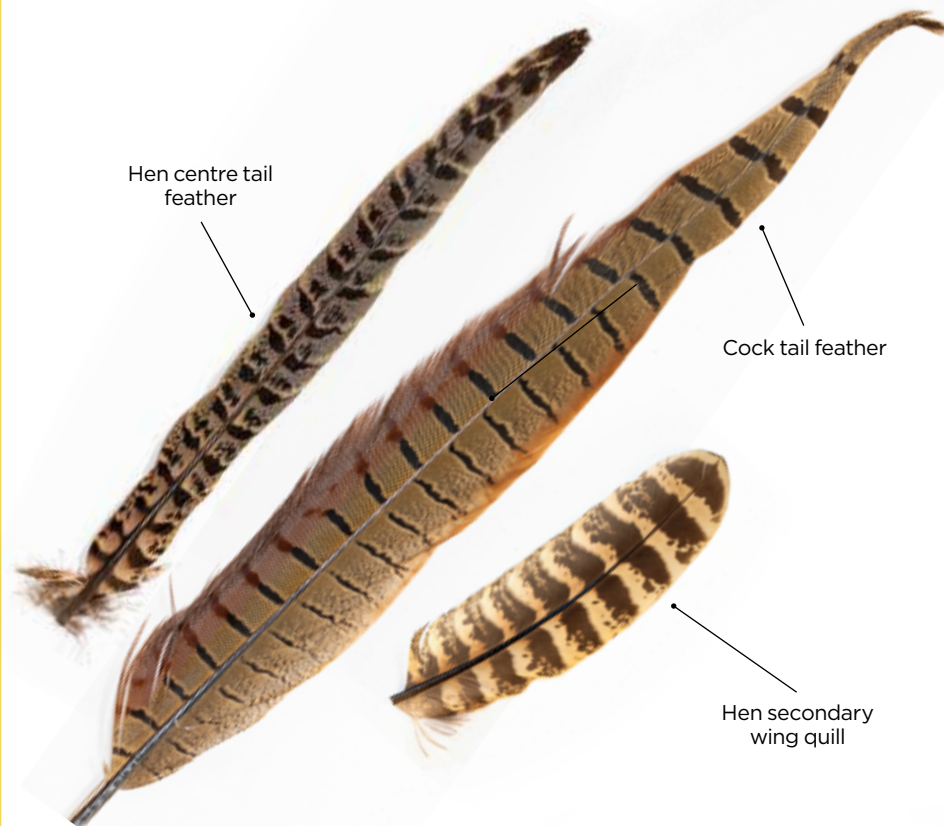


{ MATERIAL OF THE MONTH }

FAZED BY PHEASANT?

Rob Denson recommends the best feathers to use from this common game bird



Hen centre tail feather

Cock tail feather

Hen secondary wing quill

THE HUMBLE COMMON PHEASANT HAS been forming the basis of classic trout patterns for centuries. From the ubiquitous Pheasant Tail Nymph to the Cruncher, Hopper, and Silver Invicta, there are few, if any, classic pheasant patterns you would want to be without. Many feathers on the cock and hen pheasants can be used for tying, but there's only a handful that really cut it; namely the tails (centre tails, in particular) of cock and hen, and secondary wing quills of the hen. Tails, bodies, thorax covers, antennae, throats and legs are usually tied with cock tail fibres, and the hen pheasant wing quills supply the best material for matched wing slips. The hen centre tail is mostly used for winging, but has great coloration and markings for thorax covers and bodies. All the flies in this feature and a great many more classics and killers can be tied with these three feathers.

PHOTOGRAPHY: ROB DENSON



LIGHT PETER

The wings for this "Light Peter" wet-fly utilise hen pheasant secondary wing quills, in this case, dyed. Wing quills and tails dye a treat, and as you can see, the dyed "golden olive" slips above match the body hackle perfectly.



NYMPH

Other than the copper rib, this chunky pheasant tail nymph is constructed entirely from cock tail fibres. Notice that the rib is "counter-wound" (wound in the opposite direction) to the pheasant tail fibres in order to give extra security against wear and tear and sharp teeth. Counter-winding prevents a slightly damaged pattern from completely unravelling.



HEATHER FLY

Hopper legs add an irresistible edge to many patterns, not just Hoppers. This heather fly pattern by George Barron uses knotted and dyed cock pheasant tail fibres for the legs. Natural legs are just fine and probably work just as well, but as with the Peter above, colour coordinating instils valuable confidence.

COVE & CRUNCHER

Look closely at the bodies of these nymphs and you'll see tiny, fluffy fibres on each stand of pheasant tail. Just like those of a natural fly, these fibres hold hundreds of small air bubbles when the fly is submerged, adding to the deception. The Cove-style Buzzer (below) incorporates cock (body) and hen (thorax cover); the Claret Cruncher (right) uses cock tail for the body. Again, the ribs on both flies are counter-wound.



PT DRY

It's not all nymphs and wet-flies: the delightfully simple pheasant tail dry-fly accounts for thousands of trout on streams worldwide every day. The fly, right, is tied with cock but it pays to mix things up from time to time and tie with hen tail for a lighter shade, and of course, dyed tails, too.



SILVER INVICTA

Drab, but nicely marked hen pheasant centre tail contrasts beautifully with the rest of this vibrant Silver Invicta variant. The hen centre tail can provide matched wing slips or can be rolled to form a wing. Search Youtube and social media for instructional videos on both winging techniques. ■



ROB DENSON

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SHOP FOR...



Pre-tied legs are available in a range of colours. Look for ones where the first "knuckle" is around 10mm from the tip-end of the leg; this makes them suitable for smaller flies, too. Head to Youtube for instructions on tying your own.



Cock pheasant tail dyed sections in West of Ireland golden olive, olive and claret. A million nymphs, wet-flies and dry-flies await.



Beautifully marked hen pheasant secondary wing quills provide some of the best winging material. Wing slips are cut and matched from opposite feathers then placed together as opposite halves of the wing. Not easy (remember, Youtube is your friend) but there's great satisfaction and a sense of accomplishment when you master traditional winging.