

Grizzle Mink

Rob Denson ties a fly whose illusion of life makes it so effective



Hook Size 12 Kamasan B400 or B170 or any suitable dry-fly hook
Thread UTC brown olive or similar **Tail** Cock hackle fibres – grizzle, cree, furnace etc or a few fibres of mink or hare fur **Rib** Fine gold wire **Body** Hare or squirrel fur mixed with natural mink
Hackles One grizzle cock and one red game, wound along the front third of body

NOT SO many years ago, my fishing time was evenly split between rivers and stillwaters. I was equally happy whether slipping and sliding on the bankside rocks of the rain-fed streams of the North, or drifting broadside, with a long rod and a fresh wind on the lochs, loughs, llyns and reservoirs of Britain and Ireland. The divisions and sub-divisions of the many and varied river and stillwater disciplines were practised and explored, if not necessarily mastered, with much zeal and relish.

All that mattered was fishing the fly, as if, after years of sending various live invertebrates to a watery grave, some enlightened state of angling purity and truth had finally been attained. Maybe it had, maybe not, but I do think that we all feel a little enlightened and perhaps a little less “dirty” as we first embark upon our fly-fishing journey. Either way, after years of exploring our sport, and feeling that each and every discipline tried was “where it’s at”, all that matters to me now is enjoying myself. These days, a sturdy, spacious, floating vessel to carry me, and as much food, drink and tackle as I can transfer from car to boat without the aid of a sherpa, has a distinct edge over risking a sprained ankle, or worse, on slime-covered rocks, and forcing my lovingly prepared sandwiches into a waistcoat pocket tighter than a mouse’s ear. Joking apart, there is much to be garnered and shared between the river and stillwater



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disciplines, and many skills and techniques are transferable. So are many flies, and this month’s offering, Neil Patterson’s dry-fly, the Grizzle Mink, crosses over superbly well.

Neil designed the Grizzle Mink, I believe, to imitate olives and various other upwinged river flies. I can tell you that it does that job rather well, its full and extended hackle catching the faintest breath of breeze, causing it to tumble and roll in a very natural and irresistible manner. Not so many moons after witnessing its effectiveness on the river, I rather fancied it would make the transition to stillwaters quite swimmingly, as it were; and it did. When it comes to hapless trout fodder floundering around on the surface, there isn’t much that the Grizzle Mink can’t mimic. Vary the size of the Grizzle Mink accordingly, and all manner of ephemerals are covered. So, too, are sedges, dungflies, hover flies, and even daddy-longlegs, Mayflies and so on. As with most flies of this ilk – vague and suggestive – it tends on most days to outperform more specific and detailed patterns. The lack of detail, somewhat paradoxically, it seems, is the key, allowing the trout’s brain to fill in the gaps.

Details (or rather, lack of them) and paradoxes aside, the greatest asset of the Grizzle Mink is the “buzz” of life. However, those of you who are looking at this tramp of a fly, thinking that it just has to be the easiest fly in the world to tie, think again. Yes, technically it’s child’s play, but putting the thing together is the easy bit – ask Victor Frankenstein. The correct look takes a little more time, practice... and a velcro stick.

I simply cannot recommend the Grizzle Mink highly enough. It’s a true “superfly” if ever there was one. Like all good hitmen, the Grizzle Mink operates best alone. No need to fish it as part of a team. If there are trout in the vicinity, the Grizzle Mink will attract them. Vary the amount of floatant to suit the hatch and the conditions. The Grizzle Mink can be equally effective greased, blowing and rolling along at the mercy of the wind, or left “clean”, and bedding into the surface film. If you’ve given it the gift of life, a trout will take it.

TYING TIP

DON’T BE overly concerned with exact materials or colours – “life” is the key to this pattern.

TIE IN and wind both hackles together before ribbing the rear two thirds of the body, then through the hackles.

IF USING genetic (or highly-barbed) hackles, strip the barbs down one side of each feather for a sparser effect.

ATTACK THE finished fly with much gusto, using a velcro to bring out the long mink fibres. If you think you’ve overdone it, it’s probably just right. **T&S**