

Peter Ross Spider

*Venerable and adaptable, this pattern's true calling is obvious to **Rob Denson***

Hook Fulling Mill Competition Heavyweight Black Nickel or Kamasan B175 or B170
Body Flat silver tinsel
Rib Fine or medium black wire
Thorax Red seal's fur
Hackle Natural grizzle hen
Thread Black



TYING TIPS

This is a stress-free dressing, although, as is always the case with simple Spiders, it's easy to get it wrong. Keep it clean and lean. Attention to the basics and sound technique should have it looking the part.



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LOCH LEVEN, MID-MORNING, around the turn of the century (the one before last). A narrow shaft of warming sunlight punches a hole through the rapidly dissolving *haar* to reveal a boat and two anglers. A diminutive figure rides high in the bow creating a strong silhouette against the light, conjuring an almost Melvillian scene. The anglers slip by on the gentlest breeze, the silence punctuated only by the swish of a three-fly cast on a long rod and a short, silk line. The anglers gradually merge into remnants of the murk - and then they are gone. Moments later, the silence is shattered as shrieks of excitement followed by unrepeatable banter carry around the loch. Three pounds of the most perfectly proportioned and highly prized of all wild brown trout - the Loch Leven trout - lie in the bottom of the boat with a striking red, silver and teal fly jammed in its scissors. The anglers were Messrs Willison and Ross - Peter Ross - of Killin, practising together for the forthcoming Scottish Championships.

About 115 years later, I used these column inches to bring you the Peter Ross Dabbler, and discussed how the Peter Ross and its variants can polarise fly-fisherfolk. I also said that the reason many people have an allergic reaction to the Peter Ross is that they simply don't know what to do with it and how the subsequent dry net breeds contempt.

The standard Peter Ross is normally used as an attractor pattern: bung it on the middle dropper and see what happens. It can function well in this role. Similarly, if fished as a fry pattern or a minilure. However, these situations miss the mark and the essential truth of the Peter Ross: it's a Buzzer.

It took a few years for the penny to drop, but once seen, it can't be unseen. It's inconceivable to my mind that Ross, as a skilled fly-tyer, was thinking of anything else while developing his fly. The golden-pheasant tippet tail is a crude suggestion of a shuck, the silver tinsel suggests bubbles of gas, red seal's fur hints at haemoglobin, and the black provides a little movement. The deception is further enhanced by the clever use of teal: its black-and-white barring creates movement - this time, an optical illusion.

I tied the Peter Ross Spider around ten years ago in an attempt to distil the essence of the original into its purest form, something more obviously buzzer-like and suited to buzzer-fishing, able to join a team of other Buzzers, Spiders and nymphs. It's become one of my most successful alternatives to the ubiquitous skinny/hard Buzzer. The suggestion of wriggling appendages provided by the hen hackle makes it a perfect choice for the top dropper when straight-lining or on a dropper when fishing the washing line. Quick to tie, the reward-to-effort ratio is favourable and, as a bonus, you'll be keeping history and the Peter Ross legend alive. **TDS**