

{ MATERIAL OF THE MONTH }

# SYNTHETIC DUBBING

Use a little and you'll achieve a lot, says Rob Denson



**F**OR THE CREATIVE FLY-TYER, NATURAL and synthetic dubbings have many exciting and useful properties in common, but for the type of fishing I do, and the flies I tie, natural dubbings such as seal's fur, hare and squirrel are my bread and butter. However, synthetics have a trick up their sleeve that I love, and no natural dubbing can match: flash, twinkle, sparkle and shine.

In their raw state, synthetics can look a little thermonuclear; fine for certain applications such as fry patterns, lures, and pike flies, but a bit full on for much else, until you tone them down by mixing a pinch with natural dubbing or drab synthetics. The two then complement each other beautifully, and as well as gathering light and catching the eye, suggest trapped gasses, eclosion and life in general in a tempting way.

Small and delicate, or large and loud, you can give practically all flies an edge by adding a touch of synthetic dubbing. Superfine, Flashabou, Antron and Ice Dub are just a few of the attractive brands and styles.

PHOTOGRAPHY: ROB DENSON



## BEETLE

Foam and a dubbed body of peacock Lite Brite are all you need to make this simple but deadly beetle pattern. The colours of the dubbing mimic the natural iridescence of beetles perfectly as well as suggesting legs and providing welcome movement. Dub tightly to form a good base for the foam back, then rake out.



## NYMPH

Drab, natural-fibre bodies of suggestive and imitative nymphs can be greatly elevated by adding a pinch or two of pearly synthetic, such as Ice Dub, to the mix. Ten to 20 per cent of the total body mix usually does the trick. As usual, rake out the body — the pearly fibres will then bristle with life, scattering a kaleidoscope of colour around the fly.



## PEACH PALMER

Having no fluorescent peach dubbing in my collection at the time, I chopped up some Glo-Brite no.8 floss and teased the ultra-fine fibres apart. Job done! The Peachy Palmer proved deadly on lochs Eye, Watten and Harry. Synthetic dubbing doesn't have to be purpose built, just built with purpose.

## BUZZER

This lightweight Buzzer comprises three different types of synthetic dubbing: grey Superfine for the body; peacock Ice Dub for the thorax; and silver Lite Brite for the breathers — all suiting their respective jobs and working together perfectly to create a vague yet uncannily imitative fly.



## HOG

No need to blend flash and synthetic with subtle and natural in this Hog. In bright sunshine and a good wave, grabbing attention rather than imitating is the name of the game. A black wing for a strong silhouette and a bright gold body can often save the day. Gold Lite Brite to the rescue!



## MUDDLED MINNOW

Just the right amount of "neat" synthetic sets off this irresistible little fry pattern perfectly. Arthur McDonald's Muddled Minnow uses long-fibred gold Flashabou for the body to blend almost seamlessly with the wing fibre and continue the theme of shimmer and movement. ■



**ROB DENSON** has fly-fished for trout for 25 years, visiting all four corners of Britain and Ireland, combining his love of fly-tying, photography and a rolling wave. Web: [robdenson.co.uk](http://robdenson.co.uk)

## PREPPING



One of my favourite mixes: hare's ear, squirrel, and a pinch each of pearl and gold Ice Dub give a real lift to wet-flies, dry-flies, nymphs and lures. Adding synthetic dubbing to the natural makes the dubbing process child's play. Vary the natural substrate base and the colours of the synthetic fibre for endless possibilities.



Poly yarn, spooled floss, multi-strand tying thread, carpets, your partner's blouse etc are all just synthetic dubbing that hasn't been chopped up yet. Go through all the above today — you'll be amazed what you can concoct.



It's not always about bling. Subtle, natural-looking synthetic alternatives to natural dubbings like seal's fur are much better than they used to be. A great choice if you're unsure about the provenance and sustainability of your favourite natural materials. Another plus is their reliable availability and price.