

Red-ribbed Cruncher

Rob Denson ties a nymph that has taken more springtime trout for him than any other pattern

MARCH, TO coin a phrase, comes in with a lure, and out with a nymph. Or at least it should, if we are to put any stock in our weather-related idioms. Hopefully this year it will, and we can reminisce, if that's the right word, about the snow-chains and 6 ft drifts of March 2014 while we twiddle our way into April.

All flies worth their salt will always spawn 1001 variants. That's what we fly-tyers do: adopt, adapt, fiddle and fettle, to suit our individual preferences, styles and stomping-grounds. However, giving a Kate McLaren a green tail, or a Bibio a claret spot is one thing, but once in every blue moon a pattern comes along that transcends its original concept. Such is the strength and simplicity of its design that a humble collection of parts becomes a "holistic" template. The Cruncher is a case in point, as is the Diawl Bach and latterly, the Dabblers. Wholesale changes to colour-scheme/materials fail to mask the true identity, and the character and integrity of the original shines through - the hallmark of a true "super-fly".

If you'd asked me to write an appraisal of the Cruncher seven or eight years ago, it would have been very, very different from what you are reading now. I was a long time coming into the Cruncher fold - as I touched on last time I featured a Cruncher here (last April, if memory serves) - but once seduced, I've never looked back. I've since tied and tried 101 variations on the theme, but have eventually whittled that down to a handful - a couple very close to the original pheasant-tail-based version, a couple of my own variants, and this, red-ribbed rendition. Most self-respecting stillwatermen will have a red-ribbed version or two in their boxes, which are now, with good reason, accepted as "must-have" standards. The version you see here has evolved over recent years as my "go-to" variant of those variants.

So far as fishing it goes, I can, in all honesty give you no evidence, anecdotal or empirical, to elevate it above other red-ribbed versions, or indeed any other Cruncher, original or variant. They'll all catch the same fish on the same day, practically the same way, but a handful of variants in different colours/materials gives you options for different waters, light, and hatches. If it's a "nymphy" day, or a washing-line is called for, then this red-ribbed version is practically



Hook Size 10-14 Kamasan B170 or B175

Tail Cock hackle fibres - furnace/ginger etc **Rib** Fine gold wire

Body Peacock herl base layer ribbed with fine red holographic

Cheeks Medium red holographic **Thorax** Peacock herl

Hackle Furnace hen **Thread** Red or "wine" UTC 70



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always a given on the team-sheet. Ultra-dependable, and now, thanks to the addition of the counter-wound wire over-rib, ultra-durable, over the past five years or so this fly, or at least something very close to it, has taken more springtime fish for me, on a greater variety of waters, than any other flies I can think of. You'll probably already have at least one similar version in your box already; if you don't, then may I suggest you remedy the situation forthwith? **T&S**

TYING TIPS

- "Skinny" is the watchword with most generic nymph patterns. Keep them lean and you'll find them much more effective than overly fat, chunky patterns.
- For the body, use only one or two strands of peacock herl, wound ever so slightly open (not touching). Use a few touching turns to build the thorax. The skinnier and sparser the peacock herl the better. I often even remove some of the fibres by running an eraser up the strand against the nap, to make the herl even more sparse.
- Tie the herl, holographic and wire in together. Remember, last item tied in is first item to be wound, therefore the tying sequence is: wire, holographic, herl.
- "Counter rib" the wire in the opposite direction to the tinsel for extra protection and durability.
- Keep the hackle sparse - one or two turns maximum.