

# Cheeky Bugger

Try this meaty mouthful among terrestrials, recommends *Rob Denson*



## TYING TIPS

- If you struggle with Muddler heads then practise, practise, practise. As always, make use of the excellent instructional videos on the web.
- Ensure the jungle cock nails are bound securely otherwise they will slip when you spin the deer hair.

**Hook** Size 10-12 Kamasan B175 **Rib** Oval gold  
**Body** Seal's fur mix: fiery brown, medium claret, blood black, ginger  
**Body hackle** Red-brown hen **Shoulder hackle** Dyed-orange golden pheasant feather **Cheeks** Jungle cock splits **Head** Natural deer hair  
**Thread** Black or brown UTC 140 denier



**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)

**SOME PHRASES ARE JUST** so beautifully and instantly self-explanatory, as was the case the first time I heard my dear, late sister utter the words "It's a right old bugger's muddle". Those of you of a certain age may recognise what was a military expression that came to prominence around World War Two. The muddle in question was a motley crew of servicemen with dubious credentials. The phrase soon hit civvy street, and was less specific, being used to describe anything that was a chaotic mess. The perfect phrase, then, to capture the essence of a series of Muddlers that I had been working on. "Chaotic mess" may be a little harsh; I prefer "controlled chaos", which isn't a bad mantra for fly-tying in general, particularly wet- and dry-flies.

Some of you will have clocked this one before (*T&S*, October 2017, in my "How to fish Muddlers" article). Little more than the dressing was included, so here are more details. The Bugger's Muddle range evolved from a series of scruffy, leggy wet-flies – Cripplers – which took their styling and colour cues from classic wet-flies like the Soldier Palmer, Clan Chief, and Bibio. A serendipitous

feature of Cripplers was their interchangeability up and down the leader, fitting in with bushier flies and/or Muddlers and still being productive in any position. A logical extension of the Cripplers, then, was to put a Muddler head on them. The Bugger's Muddle was born.

The Kate Crippler was the first to get the treatment, closely followed by the Clan and Bibio, and then Soldier, Sooty and Claret Bumble-inspired muddlings. It wasn't until I was working on a Fiery Brown version that I had the idea of adding jungle cock cheeks behind the Muddler head: the Cheeky Bugger (CB) was born – geddit? That was in 2011 and it's been one of my most productive Muddlers ever since. I fish it a lot, and although one tends to catch fish with the flies that one fishes, the CB does seem to have an edge, particularly from early May onwards when surface sport gets going in earnest.

The CB comes into its own once terrestrials are a regular feature. The combination of "bloody" seal's fur colours and gangly appendages makes it suggestive of all kinds of hapless meaty mouthfuls. With the price and poor availability of jungle cock, one is forced to consider how much difference it makes to a pattern. I won't lie and tell you that I've done controlled tests, because I haven't, but a very similar, cheekless, fiery brown Bugger's Muddle hasn't been half as successful.

Fishing wise, it couldn't be easier. Use a floater or slow-intermediate line and attach a CB to either end of a three-fly cast. The CB isn't a dry-fly (just to clarify, as I've been asked a few times) it's a Muddler, and is designed to be fished in classic loch-style fashion. That is to say, short casts (either from boat or bank) with medium to moderately fast retrieves. One of the main factors that will govern the speed of your retrieve will be the size of the wave and the speed of the wind: as a rule of thumb, the bigger and faster they are, then the faster your retrieve should be. 