

BLACK & OLIVE STRAGGLE CORMORANT

Rob Denson recommends a highly mobile fly for stillwaters in March

IT'S ALMOST March again; and for those of us who observe the close season, the anticipation builds as a new season beckons. For those who brave the elements and fish on through, the first half of winter 2015/16 has been remarkably mild... and exceptionally wet. The unprecedented winter rainfall has, by and large, put the rivers out of commission. Social media has been bereft of the usual plethora of images of grayling with fins like expensive curtains, set against a backdrop of hoar-frosted pebbles, sparkling in the low sun. Many who need their regular fix have taken to the stillwaters that remain open, and from what I've heard, business has been good for proprietors and anglers alike. Grafham Water has "fished its head off", providing some of the best sport - and fish - of the season, mostly within feet, if not inches of the bank. Other waters have proved similarly productive with floating lines, nymphs and even dry-flies continuing to score well in January. We're not out of the woods yet, and the longest autumn on record may yet yield to the icy blast. No doubt we'll succumb to the iron grip of winter in mid March, just as my thoughts turn to having a chuck.

When Mother Nature and I eventually strike a deal, the Black & Olive Straggle Cormorant will be on the shortlist of usual suspects proficient in deceiving early-season trout. The BOSC has done rather well for me in this role for nigh on ten years. Its first incarnation was on a double, often deployed on a floater or intermediate line to increase the angle and cover a little extra depth when prospecting from the off. Although it excelled in this role, I use doubles judiciously these days - never when I intend to release fish or casting down the middle of the boat on a windy day. A single-hook version swiftly followed, allowing for a slower retrieve, and C&R.

The BOSC is a great "concept", or "modular" pattern, allowing for the addition or subtraction of various elements to suit your tastes and needs. The original, and basic concept was simply black straggle and olive marabou, which I still use on occasion, particularly in the double format. More recent tyings, on singles, have tended to include combinations of: a mix of olive/green shades in the wing, a strand or two of flash (in the wing), jungle cock splits and a head hackle. Beefing up the basic pattern in this way bridges the

Hook Kamasan B170 or 175
Body Black Straggle
(10 mm-15 mm) **Wing** Black marabou over olive marabou, or mix of black, olive, brown-olive and chartreuse **Wing slips** Gliss 'n' Glow Rootbeer, or similar
Hackle Olive hen
Cheeks Jungle-cock splits
Thread Black



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gap nicely between a simple, nymphy Cormorant, wet-fly, and mini-lure, and can be a winning combination in the early weeks of the season. Whatever your tastes, or the trout's predilections on the day, movement is the key factor in the efficacy of the BOSC. The long, black straggle and the marabou combine beautifully to give that seductive flutter and pulse usually associated with larger, bulkier lures.

The BOSC seems to be more than happy and very productive on most lines, in any position, and indeed, will catch plenty of fish throughout the season. My preferences are top or tail with an intermediate line, and a slow retrieve with the odd pause to allow the straggle and marabou to do their thing. **T&S**

TYING TIPS

- Don't overdress the body - barely touching turns will provide enough bulk and movement.
- Keep the wing on the slim side - it is, after all, a Cormorant at heart.
- As always, vary the hook weight to give more precise depth control with your tyings.
- If you opt for a hackle, keep it sparse and make only one or two turns.