

Tandoori Squirrel

How a spilt curry led Rob Denson to tie an autumn killer



Hook Size 10-12 Kamasan B170, B175 or B160

Tail Furnace or badger cock **Rib** Mirage or pearl

Body Rear half, grey squirrel; front half, seal's fur mix: orange, fiery brown, red, scarlet, ginger **Body hackle** Furnace hen

Wing Bronze mallard **Head** Natural and blood-red or claret deer hair mixed

INSPIRATION, AS they say, comes in many forms. It's usually unexpected - no more so than missing my mouth with a forkful of tandoori tikka somethingorother, leaving an embarrassing tell-tale trail down my white work shirt!

With six hours of work remaining, the situation was less than ideal, but as I scrubbed away in vain and red-faced at the orangey-redness, a fly-tying silver lining emerged from the dark cloud of the ruined shirt. The rich, warm hue struck me not only for the depth and appeal of its colour, but also for the difference between its source, and the way it now looked on a white "canvas". Therein lies an important fly-tying lesson in itself - how colours can be affected and perceived depending on what colour is underneath it, and also whether it's wet or dry.

It's well worth giving thought and experimentation, if you don't already, to the colour of thread used as your base when applying dubbing to a fly. Vary your thread colours rather than sticking to the usual, safe, sombre and neutral base colours, and look at the results when wet, too. You may get some pleasant and interesting surprises.

The shirt was eventually written off, but not before



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I'd had a chance to try to replicate the meaty hue with a seal's fur mix. The observant among you will have noticed that I like seal's fur mixes. I collect as many colours as possible. Why keep only one shade of red when we can have vermillions, scarlets and blood-reds? The same goes for olives, gingers, fiery browns and clarets. A million and one shades exist in nature, and the bigger your palette, the more shades and hues you can reproduce yourself. When tying a Claret Dabbling, for example, I'll probably make up the shade of claret I require from a mix of half a dozen or so other colours - several clarets, with reds, browns and maybe even a pinch of black thrown in. Specific colour matches with specific naturals are not my aim here (although, if accurate hatch-matching is your bag, then of course the wider your colour gamut, the

"The shirt was written off, but not before I'd had a chance to replicate the meaty hue"

better), rather, I'm throwing as many shades as possible at the trout in the hope of them seeing something they like. Furthermore, the kaleidoscopic effect produced by multi-hued seal's fur patterns - especially top-dropper patterns fished high in the water, bathed in light - appeals to me greatly. Sure, the idea may appeal more to me than the fish, but as I always say, happy anglers catch fish.

Back to the fly. The Tandoori Squirrel was my offering for a fly swap between our regular crew members. We always tie and swap a few flies for each trip. Apart from being great fun, it's a great way of mixing experience of a given water with fresh ideas, hopefully giving everyone a bunch of flies that should prove useful. That's the thinking, anyway. Loch Watten in Caithness was the water on that particular trip, and if memory serves, those who tried it caught fish. I know I did, and I have done so many times since, on Watten, further north on the main Orkney lochs, as well as Stocks, Malham Tarn and Llyn Brenig. I've even tempted a couple of back-end Rutland trout with the TS on the tail, holding up a couple of Dabblers washing-line style.

The TS, being a Muddler, though, spends the bulk of its time at the other end of the leader on the top dropper where it likes good light, working well through the summer months, but coming into its own as the days slowly begin to shorten and a splash or two from the red part of the spectrum is never a bad idea. **T&S**