

The Squimph

Rob Denson reveals a fly that caught his biggest-ever brownie

Hook Size 10-14 Kamasan B170 or 175 **Tail** Furnace, grizzle or cree cock
Rib Mirage or pearl mylar **Body** Seal's fur mix: 50/50 black and sooty olive, plus a pinch of gold ice dub **Throat** As tail **Thread** Black



BY THE time you read this, my fishing gear will already be stored away for the winter lay-off. It's a long lay-off for me - generally the end of September through to mid March, if not April. Chris Guthrie's "Fry Bash"

competition in early October often tempts me to extend my season slightly, albeit at the risk of being caught out in an early morning, early autumn frost - high stakes indeed for a confirmed warm-weather wimp. Not much tempts me to start my season early, other than 10-12 degrees and a light wind of a distinctly non-northern or eastern origin. I have no problem with fishing *per se* between October and April; it's just that the bleaker months in this country no longer fit with my idea of what fly-fishing should be. Please feel free, anyone, to whisk me off to Belize, and your luxury cabin on stilts for a spot of bonefishing. Likewise, a month somewhere south of Buenos Aires will also be given careful consideration.

A paucity of fishing in the darker months means a paucity of flies relevant to those months. Allow me, then, over the winter to bring you some flies without the constraints of the usual seasonal relevance.

I'd love to be able to tell you that my personal best

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wild brown trout fell to an appropriately hairy, scary wet-fly, plucked from a hairy, scary wave in an explosion of foam, spume and teeth. It wasn't. It took a nymph in a flat calm. The beast was an angry cock fish, closer to 7 lb than 6 lb, and, as far as I'm concerned, had no right to be out and about, let alone looking for trouble, or nymphs for that matter, in such demeaning conditions. Do these fish give no thought whatsoever to how it's all going to sound in print? Evidently not. Waves, teeth and jokes aside, the take and the fight were, in truth, as exciting as any Melvilleian melee, and all I could do for an hour or so after I slipped the magnificent fish back was sit, and shake, and smoke.

The water was Malham Tarn, some seven years ago. A seemingly perfect, albeit fishless morning of cloud and breeze gradually gave way to a flat calm and bright sunshine, and as trout tend not to read rule



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books, the place began to boil. An hour or so of dry-fly, trying to imitate the tiny specks of nondescript nothingness that were the cause of the activity, drew a blank. Time to throw in a wildcard in the form of a team of nymphs. More nondescript nothingness, I thought, but this time presented just under the surface: a Cruncher, Diawl Bach and "the Squimph" were duly figure-of-eighted on a floater. A couple of casts later and I hooked a brick wall... Then it moved.

The Squimph had duped the great fish, as it had many, many fish before it, scoring, as vague, nondescript nothingness so often does, when slavish imitation and close copy fail. It's a tying tactic first brought to my attention by the likes of Bewl warden Bob Barden, and his wonderfully non-committal, non-specific nymphs such as the legendary Killer nymph and Barden Pupa. Of course, this approach is nothing new. We all know how effective Hare's Ears and other ancient patterns of that ilk can be - and let's be honest: the Squimph is nothing more, nothing less than a Diawl Bach variant. Bob, however, in the late '80s and early '90s, along with several other similarly enlightened anglers took minimalistic to another level, paring things right back and incorporating modern materials to produce truly beautiful and devastating patterns. The Squimph was my nod to Bob and Co, and it has been catching fish - browns and rainbows - for the past 20 years. Originally tied with a mix of black and sooty olive, which remains today the most effective incarnation, other colour combinations have worked well, too. As you might have guessed, it's basically a buzzer pattern, so tie it to suit your local hatches. Funny thing, though - there were no buzzers hatching that day on Malham.

TYING TIPS

KEEPING IT sparse is the key, but do "rag" the finished fly a little with velcro for added "buzz".

TIE ON varying hook weights to control the sink rate.

VARY THE body-mix colours to suit hatches. **T&S**