



Pearly Crippler

Hang this fly carefully and it's sure to be successful, writes **Rob Denson**



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IT'S BEEN A good while since I slipped you a Crippler, as it were. Nearly three years, in fact (Claret Crippler, *T&S* February 2015). The good news is that they're still working well, taking browns and rainbows with equal success up and down the country. I've continued to add to the Crippler range and, as with the original series (Crippler Classics, *T&S* April 2011) based the more recent designs on classic stillwater wet-flies. The basic idea behind the Crippler was to elicit as much movement as possible from the fly without the inclusion of plumes of marabou or long strips of fur, by sticking to the simple format of seal fur or tinsel body, palmered with hackle. Golden pheasant body feather (springy) and hen hackle (soft and mobile) were chosen to complement each other and provide the movement. Despite the bushy, traditional style, which may at first indicate a loch/upland reservoir bent, the Crippler has become an integral part of my stillwater armoury - clear, lowland reservoirs included. Many in the Crippler series have, surprisingly enough, performed extremely

well on Chew, Rutland and Grafham, accounting for good bags of rainbows and some memorable individual fish. When Dabblers first hit these shores, they also had the look of a fly used exclusively on wild waters for wild fish: 20-odd years later and we now know that the Dabblers is far from being a one-trick pony.

I was confident, then, to Cripple one of my favourite Dabblers - the Pearly. I was right to be confident. The Pearly Crippler has been one of my most productive Cripplers yet, thanks to its seemingly boundless versatility, extracting fish of both species, stocked or wild, from a broad range of environments in any month of the season. It's done cracking shifts for me in situations as diverse as the Lake of Mentieth at Mayfly time, midsummer in Orkney, September on Rutland, and right through the season at my regular haunts, Malham and Stocks. As with most of my more successful flies, it imitates nothing in particular yet everything at once. The pearl body is critical, suggesting gas, scales and shiny body parts, backed up with the muted, natural colours and all important life-giving movement of the hackle. This combination suggests food items that will be found throughout the season.

In terms of leader position, my preference (as with most of the Crippler series) is mostly top, but sometimes tail. When fishing it as a top dropper, pay particular attention to the final stages of the retrieve, holding the fly in the film for as long as possible, rather than bouncing or dribbling it in and out. The analogy I always use to get this point across is like lifting a brush out of a pot of glue or paint. The resulting bulge that envelops the fly is irresistible to trout. Five to ten seconds spent holding the fly in the bulge is often the most productive part of the cast. As for lines, I've had success on everything from a floater to a Di7, but mostly on the floater and intermediates. **T&S**



Hook Kamasan B175 or Fulling Mill 31531 Black Nickel
Rib Black or silver wire **Body** Opal Mirage **Body hackle** Grizzle hen dyed ginger **First shoulder hackle** Golden pheasant body feather dyed black
Second shoulder hackle Grizzle hen dyed ginger **Thread** Black

TYING TIPS

- I prefer this pattern on the slim side. It's still a bushy bob fly, but not in Loch Ordie territory. Don't wind your turns of body hackle too close together.
- Golden pheasant body feather is tied in by the tip. Prepare it as you would when tying any other hackle in by the tip - stroke the fibres backwards, then trim the last three or four fibres and tie in. "Double" the hackle (fold backwards along the stalk) and wind - just one or two turns.
- Try different thread colours under the Mirage - it can make a huge difference to the body colour.