

# Hare's Ear Muddler

**Rob Denson** praises a fly that's simple, satisfying and often saves the day



**Hook** Size 10-12 Kamasan B175 or 170 **Tail** Bronze mallard **Rib** Oval gold **Body** Hare's ear/mask **Body hackle** Palmered drab hen (ginger/brown) **Head** Natural deer hair (Roe)



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**I**S THERE ANYTHING more fun and more rewarding to tie than a muddler? That satisfying flare and spin of the deer hair as you gradually tighten the thread. Then there's the haircut: a few deft strokes of our scissors and before our very eyes a rather ungainly and amusingly chaotic little ball is transformed into a thing of beauty. Our creation now has angler appeal by the bucketload. Best of all, it has fish appeal in equal measure. On the downside, out of all the different families of trout flies the muddler probably has more variations on the theme than any other. This can be daunting and confusing. The permutations seem infinite: size, shape, head colour, hackle colour, *ad infinitum*. Would Sir care for a little Frazzle-Dazzle in the tail?

Let me help you with a couple of those decisions: keep it simple, keep it hare's ear. The Hare's Ear Muddler - or at least one very similar to this one - was the first muddler pattern I tied. More than 25 years on, it still holds a place in my box and a regular place on my leader.

Muddler Minnows, as they were called back then, consisted of half a turkey and half a pound of deer hair lashed to a size 6 or 8 hook. Shifting copious amounts of water and looking like a small bird was the name of the game. Fine, if you're targeting trout the size of your leg, but I had more modest goals in mind. Enter the mini muddler. The term was loosely applied to anything tied on a size 10 or smaller, and alternative colours, materials and designs to those of the original Muddler Minnow were explored. We seem to have dropped the mini bit these days, and anything with a spun deer-hair head is now accepted as a muddler.

Like most flies that become firm favourites, the Hare's Ear Muddler had success on its first

outing. That lovely, early summer Sunday on Stocks reservoir will live long in the memory for two reasons. First, that rarest of things, a warm easterly. Second, lots of fish to the Hare's Ear Muddler. With high, blanket cloud and a warm, 10 mph wind at my back, long drifts along my favourite bank were a mouth-watering proposition. Shipman's Buzzers had served me well the previous week but a week is a long time in fishing and two hours is a long time without a fish. On went the newly fettled Hare's Ear Muddler, fished on the top dropper with a couple of wet-flies below. I lost count of the fish that afternoon.

I'd love to tell you that I knew what I was doing, and why I was doing it. The truth is that at the time I didn't have the foggiest notion. Many years later, after seeing the same scenario pan out several more times, I can tell you that there was nothing more to it than keeping things simple and getting the basics right - like fishing a dull fly on a dull day, and a busy, bushy fly to get a reaction from fish that had almost, but not quite, gone off the boil.

Red-letter days always have a simple explanation and, invariably, simple flies and simple tactics at their core. It's amazing how often this wishy-washy thing has been involved in mine. **T&S**

## TYING TIPS

- Tying muddlers is something that needs to be seen rather than described. The best tip I could give you would be to watch videos online - there are dozens out there. After that, sit down with a patch of deer hair, and just practise spinning and trimming deer hair.
- Curved scissors are not necessary for trimming muddlers. If anything, they're a hindrance. Standard, straight scissors will serve you much better.