

FLIES FOR AN IRISH SPRING

Paul Caslin, one of Ireland's finest fly-tyers, picks his favourite patterns for early-season lough trout

PHOTOGRAPHY: ROB DENSON



PAUL CASLIN is a postman from County Mayo, who has fished for trout on the western loughs of Ireland for over 20 years, with the odd trip to Carrowmore or Beltra for sea-trout and salmon.

MY SPRING fishing on the western loughs involves mostly wet-fly fishing from a drifting boat. On loughs such as Conn, Mask or even Cullin or Carra, there may be odd days of Buzzer and nymph fishing, but primarily the weather, the window of opportunity and the conditions will dictate the pulling of wet-flies.

With this in mind I have tied six of my favourite spring lough flies. They are what you might call suggestive patterns in that they suggest various food items rather than imitate one. In March and April the water is still cold and so I fish them on a fast intermediate or medium-sinking line rather than a floater. I tend to target the shallows and rocks where the whole ecosystem of the lough is starting to wake from its winter coma. This is where the water temperatures will increase and the first hatches appear.

“I tend to target the shallows and rocks, where the whole ecosystem is starting to wake from its winter coma”

Sooty Olive variant

Hook Size 10-14 Kamasan B130 **Tail** Golden-pheasant tippets, dyed hot orange **Rib** Flat gold tinsel or oval gold **Body** Sooty olive seal fur **Body hackle** Sooty olive cock **Wing** Bronze mallard **Head hackle** Black or furnace hen **Eyes** Jungle cock nails/splits or goose biots, dyed chartreuse

It would be a mistake to go afloat on the loughs at this time of year without a good Sooty Olive pattern and this variant is my favourite. The fish seem to love it tied this way. I normally fish it as part of a three-fly cast on the point or the middle dropper. It seems to do well as a middle dropper on an intermediate or medium-sinking line. The Sooty Olive is a good, general representation of many food items and works especially well (in smaller sizes) when lake olives are hatching. I also tie it without the body hackle.

McCormack's Peter variant

Hook Size 10-14 Kamasan B130 **Rib** Oval gold tinsel **Body** Mix of medium olive seal fur and hare's ear **Body hackle** Red game **Shoulder hackle** Hen, dyed ginger **Head hackle** Brown partridge, dyed ginger

This fly appeared in T&S a few years ago in an article written by the late Rod Tye. The pattern was given to Rod by Micky McCormack, a gillie on Lough Conn. I copied it and my boat partner and I had instant success. It is definitely one for the top dropper, on a line of any density. It is an excellent all-year fly, but is particularly effective in the spring and early summer. The original was tied with a red game head hackle with brown partridge over.

Ginger Dabbling

Hook Size 10-14 Kamasan B130 **Tail** Bunch of bronze mallard fibres **Rib** UTC hot yellow wire **Body** Mix of ginger and golden-olive seal fur **Body hackle** Natural ginger cock, dyed ginger **Wing** Bronze mallard, cloaked **Eyes** Jungle cock nails or splits (optional)

I use a size 10-12 Ginger Dabbling a lot at this time of year, up to and during the mayfly season. I normally fish it on the tail of a three-fly cast and on occasions as the top dropper. In a size 14 it is also a first-class pattern for olive-feeders when fished on the top dropper. One fisher I've tied these for has so much faith in them that he will fish three at the same time. If the Ginger Dabbling isn't working, then you know you're in for a tough day.

Claret Dabbling

Hook Size 10-14 Kamasan B130 **Tag** Glo-Brite No 5 **Tail** Bronze mallard fibres **Rib** Medium pearl tinsel **Body** Claret seal fur **Body hackle** Claret cock **Wing** Bronze mallard cloak **Eyes** Jungle cock nails/splits or goose biots, dyed hot orange

Every lough fisher in Ireland will have some sort of Claret Dabbling in their box and this one has served me very well over the years. Trout seem to find claret extremely attractive, but a good claret fly should have a reddish glow to it when held to the light. I fish this fly in the point or top-dropper position on a three-fly cast and only occasionally in the middle.



Green George
Hook Size 8-10 Kamasan B160
Tail Glo-Brite No 6 **Rib** Medium pearl tinsel **Body** Olive-brown seal fur **Body hackle** Olive-brown cock **Legs** Knotted black pheasant-tail legs
Shoulder hackle Melvin olive hen **Head hackle** Black hen **Eyes** Jungle cock nails or splits

This pattern was originally tied by Paul Cantillon from Cork and is a cracking fly during the spring. Fished in the top-dropper position on an intermediate or sinking line over rocks and shallows, the shrimp- and hoglice-feeders seem to find it irresistible. This is a fly that has provided me with excellent fishing on otherwise hard days in April and early May. Later in the season it is a first-class fly for the daphnia-feeding fish in the deeper water. A must-have fly.

“Excellent in a size 12 or 14 in a good wind when the duckfly are hatching”



Bibio variant
Hook Size 8-12 Kamasan B160
Rib Oval silver tinsel **Body** (Rear) red seal fur; (front) mix of black seal fur and black UV Ice Dub
Body hackle Black cock **Legs** Black knotted pheasant tail fibres **Head hackle** Furnace hen

There are many Bibios and this is just the way I like to tie them. It is a first-rate wet-fly for springtime when the killer combination of black, red and silver really appeals to fish. I would normally have the fly on the top dropper with maybe a Silver Dabbler on the middle and the Claret Dabbler on the point. Excellent in a size 12 or 14 in a good wind when the duckfly are hatching. Don't leave home without them.