

GB HEATHER FLY

Rob Denson recommends George Barron's dry Bibio



MATERIALS

- Hook** Size 10-12 Fulling Mill Short Shank
- Rib** UTC Mirage or pearl tinsel
- Body** Seal's fur – black, red, black – brushed out
- Legs** Knotted pheasant tail dyed red
- Wing** Tips of five or six natural CDC feathers
- Head** Black seal's fur, brushed out

I'M HOPING FOR A BUMPER FALL OF heather fly this summer. There's nothing I enjoy more than casting adrift in short-sleeves and shades when the trout are doing cartwheels for *Bibio pomonae*, the scarlet-legged cousin of *Bibio johannis* (the black gnat) and *Bibio marci* (the hawthorn fly). The heather fly is the last of the three to emerge, sometimes as early as June, although it's usually July before they're on the wing in large numbers, peaking in August. As with all *bibios*, they are ungainly flyers. Lacking in style and manoeuvrability, they are instantly recognisable, blowing around at the whim of the wind. But that's a good thing because when

they crashland on the water they are instantly recognisable to trout, too. It's a sign that one of the great feasts of the season is about to begin.

If you tie your own flies I suspect your favourite heather fly pattern is one of your own design. I'd expect nothing less. It's an interesting, fun and relatively simple fly to tie. My favourite heather fly was my own... until Welsh wizard George Barron showed me this one on a heather fly-infested Llyn Brenig. I've not looked back and with more days (and heather fly patterns) behind me now than in front, spending time developing another would be silly, such is the efficacy of George's pattern.

TYING TIPS

- Try to keep the body on the short side (but not too stocky) and the same with the wing.
- Brush out the seal's fur body before adding the legs, otherwise you may pull off the legs.
- Give the fly black legs and it will double as a superb hawthorn fly.

As a bonus, George's pattern is a phenomenally good fly at any time of year. I should clarify that I'm talking about dry-flies – the incomparable Bibio wet-fly, among others, will cover you for when wets are the way forward. Surely, though, taking trout on terrestrials is all about fishing the dry-fly? One of the things I love about fishing a fall of terrestrials is that it can be a great leveller. When trout are taking waterborne food beneath the surface we are often up against it, trying to figure out what, where and when they are taking, and we're often left scratching our heads. With terrestrials, it's usually glaringly obvious. Just observe and respond.

Terrestrials don't fall where the trout want them to, either – the trout must go to wherever the fly fall, which invariably means all over the loch, lake or llyn.

Whether fishing from boat or bank, there are two major tactics: fan-casting "blind" or pitching at risers. Pitching at risers is easy – you work out which way the fish is travelling and pitch five yards in front of it. What could go wrong?

When fan casting, leave the fly(ies) for no more than ten seconds (seven or eight is better) before lifting off and re-casting. If nothing has come to the fly in those few seconds, it's unlikely there's a fish in the vicinity – move on. Believe me, it's infinitely more effective than leaving the fly while you hum "Bohemian Rhapsody". ■

HOW TO TIE THE HEATHER FLY



1 Run the tying thread down to the bend and catch in a length of pearl tinsel. Dub on a pinch of black seal's fur and apply two or three turns.



2 With the rear body section of black seal fur in place, dub on a pinch of red seal's fur and apply two turns to form the middle section.



3 Add a final section of black seal's fur to complete the body – the effect should be quite rough. Wind on three, evenly spaced turns of tinsel.



4 Secure the loose end of the tinsel and trim off the waste. With a dubbing needle or piece of velcro, brush out the seal's fur body.



5 Take six dyed-red pheasant tail fibres and apply two knots to each, to suggest leg-joints. Add three legs to each side of the body.



6 Remove the waste ends of the pheasant tail fibres, then catch in a few plumes of natural CDC to form the wing. Ensure their tips are level.



7 Secure the CDC plumes with tight thread turns, then trim off the waste. Dub a small amount of black seal's fur on to the thread.



8 Apply three turns of the fur to form the head then cast off the thread with a whip finish. Brush out the seal's fur fibres so they mix into the wing.