

Blasts from the past

Run for Your Rods, It's Over!

Stevie Munn can't wait to get out on his beloved rivers and loughs again, and here are three flies he always takes with him.



Hooray! It's finally here, my real fishing season that is, as in my part of this island the game angling season begins on the first day of March. I feel that I'm starting to come alive again, like some woodland creature coming out of hibernation. As dedicated fly anglers we have survived the dark days of winter, we have endured the deadly cabin fever, some of us may have even suffered particularly badly and even fallen prey to mind numbing daytime television. We may even have resorted to things that so called normal folk do, like working most days, doing housework, decorating and even washing the car from time to time, to try and take our minds off casting to a trout or salmon in a beautiful shining stream or wild Irish lough.

But now we feel invigorated once again and we run around like frantic mad March hares. We are now busily doing hugely important tasks like sorting out our tackle, cleaning down our fly lines, fixing or replacing leaky waders, taking our fly rods out of storage, checking their rings or line guides and perhaps most importantly dressing wonderful flies to restock our fly boxes and grace our leaders and hopefully take us a fish or two in the coming season.

Okay, I know I may be exaggerating just a little bit. I know a lot of us now fish in the winter for rainbow trout at stocked fisheries and some of the salmon rivers have been open since January and perhaps some of us may have been out in search of pike, which is becoming ever popular over the winter months

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with the fly rod. Some of us may have even been fortunate enough to have done some angling in a far off land. All these parts of our sport can be great, but as local anglers we now have many more options as rivers and lakes open and winter starts to loosen its cold grip and spring pushes in. Now here are three flies that will do very well in the coming months, I hope you will dress a few.

FACT FILE

Stevie Munn has fished many places in the world but grew up fishing on rivers and loughs of Ireland where he now guides.

He is a member of the Hardy Greys Academy, and helps run teaching courses on the River Drowes in Ireland and in Canada.

He is a qualified Advanced Professional Game Angling Instructor in Casting (APGAI) and Association of Professional Game Angling Instructors in Fly Tying (APGAI-Ireland).

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Start your thread and wind back to the bend. Prepare a grizzle hackle feather and tie it in. I add a drop of diluted head cement at the tie-in point, and allow it to dry. This stops the hackle pulling out and makes the fly a bit more durable. I love flies with peacock herl in the dressing. The Griffith's Gnat has become a truly classic dry fly pattern that can imitate many of the items that are on a trout's menu. The fly was invented by an American fly fishing legend George A Griffith,

THE GRIFFITH'S GNAT

Hook: Fine wire size 14-26

Thread: 12/0 black

Body: Peacock herl

Hackle: Grizzle (genetic capes are best for this fly)

'EVERY TROUT ANGLER SHOULD CARRY A GRIFFITH'S GNAT, WHETHER THEY FISH ON STILLWATERS, LOUGHS OR RIVERS.'

the founder of Trout Unlimited, America's leading trout and salmon conservation organization. It was first designed as an emerging or adult midge or as a midge cluster pattern. Every trout angler should carry it, whether they fish on stillwaters, loughs or rivers. Its beauty lies in its use of simple and common fly tying materials to produce one of the world's most effective dry flies. This fly will work right though the season. When trout are feeding on small insects, it's a must-have pattern.



The Blae and Black is a very old pattern, but in my research I have not found a date for. Most books suggest it's of Scottish origin and some tell me it is linked to another truly great old fly the Black Pennell. If this is true, it makes the fly Edwardian and most likely devised by an Englishman, H Cholmondely Pennell, who spent much of his life fishing in northern Europe and wintering on the French Riviera.

THE BLAE AND BLACK

Hook: 6-16 wet fly

Tying silk: Black

Body: Black floss or seal's fur (some old dressings ask for water-rat or mole)

Rib: Silver oval tinsel or wire

Hackle: Black hen

Wing: Grey duck, medium starling or hen blackbird

Head: Whip finish, trim & clear varnish

The Blae and Black is a very good choice early in the season if lough fishing at duck fly time, I will sometimes dress it with jungle cock cheeks for this type of fishing and fish it on the middle or top dropper. The trout most likely take it for an emerging fly. It is not only a lough fly, however, and will also work well on the river and when dressed in its larger sizes it has often worked for salmon, dollaghan and sea trout.



The Camasunary Killer was first shown to me by a fishing pal of mine, Jackie Child, while I was fishing with him on the Rosses loughs in Co Donegal many years ago. It's named after a fishery on the Isle of Skye. The fly first appears in a book called 'Fishing From Afar' by Stephen Johnson, written in a POW camp in Germany after his plane was shot down during World War Two. The Camasunary Killer has a reputation as a great sea trout and salmon fly. Peter

THE CAMASUNARY KILLER

Hook: 6-12 wet fly or low water single salmon 10

Thread: Black

Tail: Royal blue wool or floss

Rib: Oval silver tinsel or wire

Body: In two halves, the first royal blue wool or floss, the second red wool or floss.

Hackle: Black

Dean says of it: "It is without any doubt the most successful wet fly I've ever come across. Salmon take it as freely as sea trout, and in small sizes it is an excellent lake pattern, as good in Scotland and Ireland as in the south and west country." I have been told by many that it works very well in the peat stained water of the Connemara fisheries, where it can be fished on the dropper or the point.