

Blasts from the past

It's time to re-stock your fly boxes, says **Stevie Munn**, and here are three invaluable flies to keep you going through the winter.



October is always a strange month I feel, as it's the last month of the river season in my part of the world. Unlike in the past, though, it's not the end of my fishing as. I now fish from time to time for rainbow trout at some local stillwater fishery and I will also get out for the odd pike on the fly, or if I'm very lucky, escape to fish in Canada for steelhead or Pacific salmon with my good friend and fellow fly casting instructor Willie Holmes.

But apart from those ifs and buts, my season is coming to an end. Now normally October goes out with a bang as it is a time when hopefully my local rivers are full of large migratory trout and salmon and in past years it's always been a good month to land a whopper, which I will with luck photograph and gently return. This seems only fair as they are getting ready to spawn, and normally not worth eating anyway. Of course this all hinges on the rivers not getting too much rain and not getting too dirty for me, who normally depends on the fly.

October is also a month to look back at what flies worked best over the season and get out the now depleted fly boxes and start to replace the contents, as the flies that worked are also the ones that are most likely to have finished life up a tree, got blunted on a rock, or just ended up the worse for wear as they have fooled a fish once to often. I remember my late father always used to say at the end of October "Hey you! Get some flies that were great dressed though the winter so next season can be even better." So I'm going to give you three flies that through most seasons have worked well and suggest that you dress some over the winter.

FACT FILE

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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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This is a fly that you just can't have enough of in your box. It's deadly for trout whether on rivers, loughs or stillwaters, but it also for salmon. It proved it's worth again on the river Drowes in Donegal last year with three English clients who were attending one of the Hardy Academy weekends at the Lareen Estate. All of them managed to land salmon on this fly, which gave me great satisfaction.

BEAD HEAD HARE'S EAR (MUNN'S VARIANT)

Hook: Size 8-16

Tail: Mallard feather fibres (optional few strands of pearly twinkle)

Rib: Gold, silver or pearly

Body: Hare's mask mix

Hackle: One or two turns of orange hackle

Head: Gold or silver bead

'YOU CAN'T HAVE ENOUGH HARE'S EARS IN YOUR BOX.'

Traditionally the pattern used fur from a hare's ear, mingling the longer guard hairs with the lighter coloured under fur for a body, but I prefer the mask of the hare. I sometimes use the fur of my ginger tomcat Angus. Dressed in their various guises, Hare's Ears can represent many of the insects that trout feed on including, mayflies, olives, caddis, shrimp, and hog louse.



The Grey Duster is perhaps one of the greatest dry flies ever invented and I know many anglers who would not be without it. As a midge imitation it is fantastic on stillwaters and in Charles Jardine's book 'Sothy's Guide to Trout Fishing' he states it is a fly that is excellent when caenis are on the water, dressed on sizes 18-20. It also works well in a olive or mayfly hatch

THE GREY DUSTER

Hook: Size 10-20

Tail (optional): A few badger cock fibres

Body: Blue-grey rabbit's fur

Head hackle: Badger cock

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on rivers, in fact it seems to work well in just about any kind of fly hatch on rivers, a great utility dry fly. I am unsure just how old the Duster is, but I have come across it in many old fly dressing books, so it has been around for a long time. In EJ (Ted) Malone's classic book 'Irish Trout and Salmon Flies' he also gives an alternative body of black greyhound undercoat.



This fly originated in France around the 1960s and was first dressed by Dr JP Pequegnot, a very well known fly angler and fly dresser in his own country. His fly quickly found success, especially in its native land. It works extremely well on Ireland's rivers and stillwaters throughout the season. It is mentioned in an updated reprint of that great book 'A Dictionary of Trout Flies' by A Courtney Williams, which states that the fly should be dressed with the head

THE ASSASSINE (DR JP PEQUEGNOT)

Hook: Size 12-16

Body: Yellow olive waxed tying thread

Body hackle: Smokey grey or blue dun

Head hackle: Grey or brown English partridge, wound so the feather fibres point forward.

Note: Sometimes I dress this fly with a tail of bronze mallard and instead of a body hackle I put just two turns behind the partridge hackle. This makes an excellent dry fly but I believe the above pattern is the original.

hackle first and several turns of the body hackle just behind this to stiffen the forward curvature of the head hackle, the remainder being wound down the body palmer style. The tying thread or silk is tied off at the back of the hook, not at the head as normal. The Assassin was first shown to me by local angler Mr T Gillan and I must thank him for this as it has been a fantastic dry fly for me.