

A fly fisherman wearing a blue cap, a light blue shirt, and a fishing vest is wading in a river. He is holding a fishing rod and a net, and a fish is visible in the water. The background is a lush green riverbank.

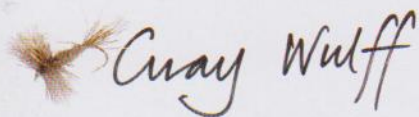
TEN FLIES

THE ONLY TEN FLIES YOU WILL EVER NEED

SIMON COOPER NOMINATES HIS FAVOURITES.

Anglers as a breed are always after the 'silver bullet' solution to every fishing conundrum and as a teenage fly fisher obsessed with the sport I was no different. My school friends all had their sporting heroes: Kevin Keegan, Geoffrey Boycott, the British Lions and all those from the 1970s who were revered and discussed to the nth degree on a daily basis. ➔

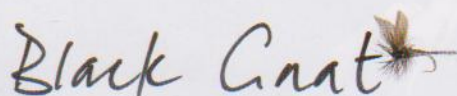
TEN FLIES



Gray Wulff: Will float for ever. Probably the most buoyant fly in your box. Use all the sizes. Very versatile and may be used to imitate almost any type of fly. Sizes 8-18.



Parachute Adams: It looks such a dull fly to the human eye, but trout on every continent around the globe would disagree. This is my default fly of choice. Sizes 12-20.



Black Gnat: Fish on or in the surface as gnats fall in the water by accident or when dead. When the conditions are right even a size 22 is easy to spot. Sizes 14-22.



Daddy Long Legs: Don't leave home without it. Deadly when trout ignore all other flies. It will bring a grumpy trout up from the deep like no other. Sizes 8-12.



Damsel nymph: Related to the Dragon fly this is one of the biggest nymphs trout regularly feed on. Lovely pattern to retrieve with a draw/wait/draw. Trout will hit it on the 'wait'. Sizes 10-12.



Kinkhammer: Invented in 1984 and has dominated dry fly boxes ever since. Keep dry and well treated with floatant. Light olive is my favourite. Sizes 12-16.



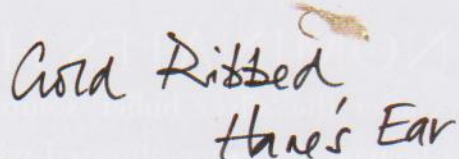
F Fly: Slovenia's greatest export. This is a Cul de Canard or CDC (highly buoyant duck feather) that is durable, easy to see on the surface and attractive to trout and grayling. Sizes 14-18.



Buzzer: Imitates a hatch that takes places every day of the year on rivers and lakes. A major part of any trout diet. Most effective when used with a sight bob or indicator. Sizes 10-16



Pheasant Tail Nymph: Frank Sawyer's classic. Fish it anytime, anywhere. Use the weighted version to reach fish at all depths. Tweak and lift to attract attention. Sizes 10-18.



Gold Ribbed Hare's Ear: Use the gold bead to attract your fish on the peripheral vision of your target trout. Big sizes on stillwaters, smaller sizes on rivers. Sizes 8-18.

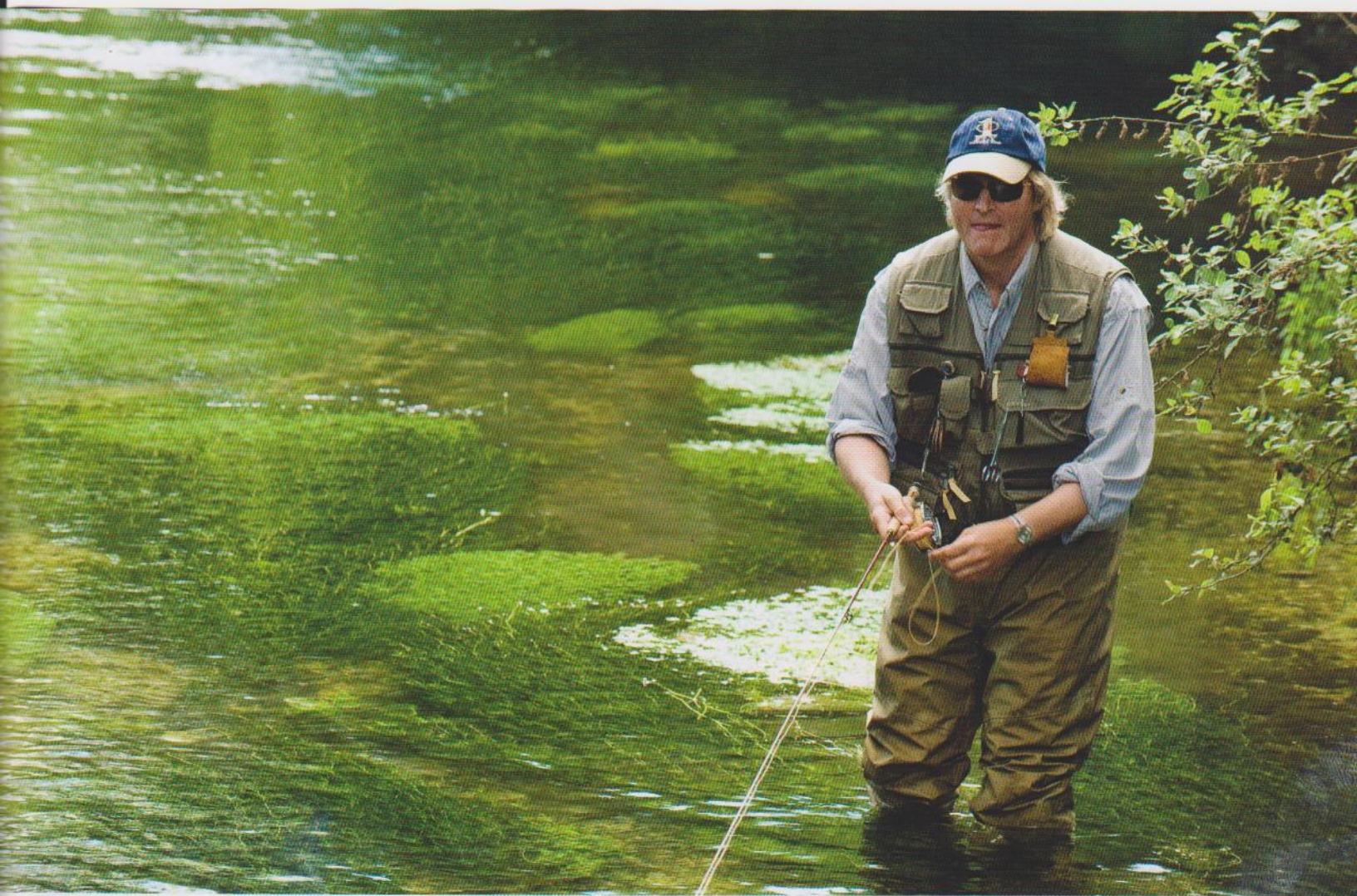
◀ My hero, was, naturally enough the best known fly fisherman of his era. He published books, appeared on TV and was on the cover of just about every fishing periodical. Needless to say any attempt to steer the common room conversation to my hero was met with well-deserved derision. In my school the Fly Fishing Society had one member.

It was about this time that I became convinced that my silver bullet solution to catching the most and biggest fish was selecting the correct size of fly. I read all there was to find on the subject and experimented (mostly unsuccessfully) on every fishing foray. Clearly I was not going to find the answer, so surely my angling hero would provide it? I'd heard that he would be at the Game Fair at Stratfield Saye (or it might have been Blenheim Palace, it was a long time ago) signing his latest book, so that was where I headed.

Clutching my £10 note I stood in the queue as the great man signed and chatted whilst I rehearsed my question. It was only when there were two people left in front of me that I suddenly became seized with doubt. The realisation came to me; my hero was never going to give up the one piece of information that had made him successful. He would take the magic number to his grave.

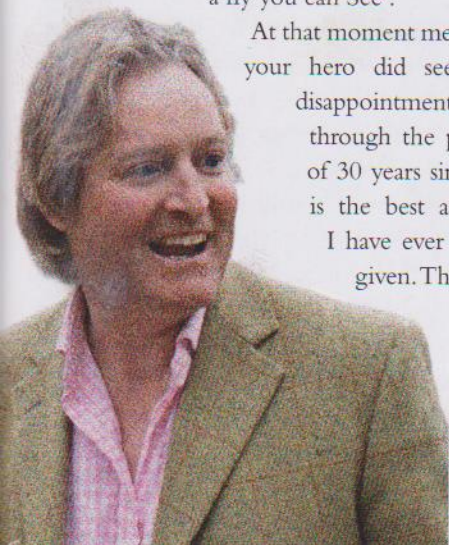
Some people say you should never meet your heroes as they will always disappoint, well it didn't seem that way to me. He was charming, genuinely interested by my enthusiasm and when the conversation gave me the perfect opening to pop the question it was as sure as that silver bullet: "What is the best size of fly to use?" He looked at me with a smile, "That's a very good question. Would you like me to write the answer in your book?". Clearly this was a For Your Eyes Only piece of information. I nodded, he wrote, blotted the ink, closed the cover and handed me the book with a wink.

Bursting out of the marquee into the



sunshine I opened the book and written on the inside cover in thick blue ink were the words, "To Simon: Always fish a fly you can See." I turned over the page. Surely he had written more? He had not. I think I may have started crying. This seemed like no sort of answer. Where were the magic size numbers I expected? Would it hurt him to tell me something like wet flies in size 12 or dry flies in size 16. But no - just 'Always fish a fly you can See'.

At that moment meeting your hero did seem a disappointment but through the prism of 30 years since it is the best advice I have ever been given. There is



no right size for any given fly. Yes, there is a range and that is what I will give for my Top 10 but within that always fish the fly you can see. If it is a dry fly you need to be able to see where it lands, follow the drift and control the skate and drag. If it is a sinking fly controlling the depth and seeing the reaction of the fish is paramount.

"Clutching my £10 note I stood in the queue as the great man signed and chatted whilst I rehearsed my question."

Simon Cooper is founder and managing director of Fishing Breaks, agent for the River Test and chalk streams in southern England.

Thanks to Robjett's of Stockbridge for providing the 10 flies photographed

One fly

The River Test One Fly is a one-day contest on Thursday April 28 in which all comers and celebrity guests battle it out to bag the most, biggest and best fish at a unique event on the River Test, the historic home of British fly fishing. But here's the catch - each angler can only use one single fly throughout the contest as they hunt their quarry, the wily and elusive trout. Lose that fly - and you're fired! One fly, one chance is all that stands between triumph and despair. Every angler is accompanied for the duration of the contest by a fishing guide who acts as guide, netsman, scorer and referee. All fish must be released and the scoring is based on points according to the length of each fish caught. Participants last year included Chris Tarrant and Bob James. See www.fishingbreaks.com