

Hatch Calendar

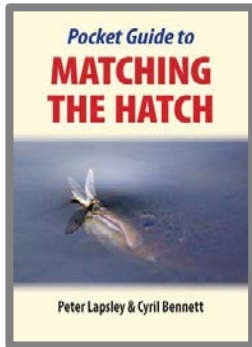


Simon Cooper
Chalkstream
Edition

HATCH CALENDAR

I cannot pretend that this Hatch Calendar is solely my own work. Despite years of being fishing guide I often struggle to make sense of entomology and the ever changing insect population that inhabits our wonderful chalkstreams.

I owe a huge debt to those many Guides who have corrected my failings over the years (you know who you are) and to those numerous fly fishers, far better than me, who I have been privileged to fish with.



However, if I had to single out one fisherman it would in fact be two: Peter Lapsley and Cyril Bennett who wrote the brilliant 'Pocket Guide to Matching the Hatch', published by Merlin Unwin in 2010.

I unreservedly apologise to Peter and Cyril for shamelessly borrowing from their book and I only hope they are accepting of the old adage that imitation is the sincerest form of flattery.

There are many esoteric and local variants I could have included in the Hatch Calendar, but I made it my mission to select only flies that are well known and easy to buy or tie. I am sure your local fly shop will stock them all, but if you like to buy on-line I have put together a pack for each month, April to September. They have been specially tied for me by Fulling Mill Flies and are available through the Fishing Breaks web site for next day delivery.

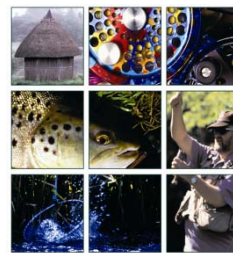
Tight lines!

Simon Cooper

Fishing Breaks
Nether Wallop Mill
Hampshire
www.fishingbreaks.co.uk



APRIL FISHING ADVICE

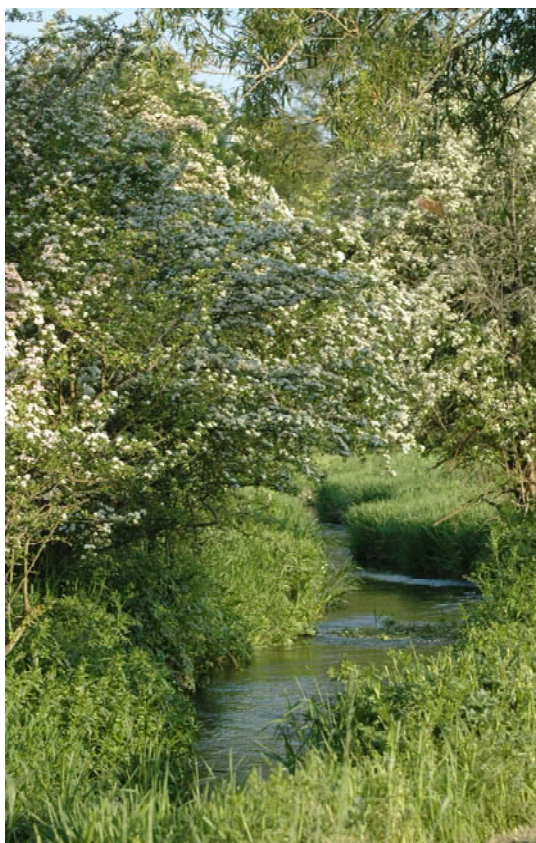


TACTICS

April days are always full of excitement as the new season starts; you are straining at the leash after months of confinement and there are new rods, lines, flies and assorted kit to be tried out for the first time.

It is difficult not to let your mood, and by association your fishing tactics, be dictated by the weather that prevails on the day. On a sunny, spring day the river will look alive; on a gloomy, rainy day as dead as a door nail. But it is worth reminding ourselves that for the fish the water temperature, flow and insect activity changes very little from day to day.

For the early season angler it is cold winds that are the killer, especially when from the north or east. On days like this fish nymphs well down in the water or seek out sheltered spots. On better days wait for the temperature to rise around mid-morning and have Large Dark Olive patterns ready for the hatch or fish a Pheasant Tail Nymph just beneath the surface.



Hawthorn bush in flower

WEATHER

There seems to be no middle ground in April – the days are positively spring-like or as gloomy as can be, but it is the wind that is your enemy. A cold north or east wind will kill off any hatches as it chills down the surface film, sending any emerging nymphs back down to wait another day.

TACKLE TIPS

Not everyone approves of strike indicators but in choppy, dark water and at the start of the season when reactions are still slow (!) they are a great boon.



HATCHES

These are the four main groups to be found on the chalkstreams during April:

Large Dark Olive

This is the predominate hatch for the month and the default fly to fish if you are not certain what to try.

Nymph	Pheasant Tail Nymph	size 14
Emerger	JG Emerger	14
Dun	Kite's Imperial	14



JG Emerger

Grannom

One of the two speciality hatches this month. This member of the sedge family will hatch for 10-14 days in great abundance, though the hatches may be very localised.

Grannom 14



Grannom

Hawthorn

The second speciality hatch, usually appearing for two weeks starting in the last week of April.

Hawthorn	12-14
Black Gnat	16-18



Hawthorn

Shrimp

These are the commonest creatures that trout eat; if you see a trout turn on their sides and 'wriggle' along they are dislodging shrimps from the gravel bed.

Green or Pink shrimp	12-14
Sawyer's Killer Bug	14



Green shrimp



Dark Olive



Freshwater Shrimp

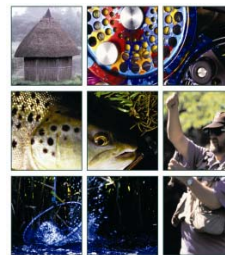


Grannom



Hawthorn

MAY FISHING ADVICE



TACTICS

Mayfly madness. Duffer's fortnight. Call it what you will but May is one of the most spectacular months of the year to visit the chalkstreams when the Ephemera danica or Mayfly hatches drift across the river like gun smoke.

It is best to divide the month into three distinct portions: the first is in early May when there will be the Hawthorn hatch. The third is later in the month when the Mayfly is on. The second, and the trickiest, is that period between the two.

The Hawthorn hatch will have started in April, so the trout will be familiar with them right through the first week of May and even take them when there is no hatch. For the first few days of the Mayfly hatch be prepared for trout to be curious but suspicious of these unfamiliar flies. Sometimes a little 'twitch' will do the trick.



Mayfly

In that week or more that runs up to the Mayfly don't get fooled into thinking the trout are just hanging around in anticipation – believe me after a long winter they are hungry for the right offering. Mayfly nymphs are an obvious contender, plus Iron Blue that like to hatch on cold, blustery days with Black Gnats in various sizes and guises the default pattern.

WEATHER

It takes some really bad weather to stop the Mayfly hatch, so don't be discouraged if the weather is foul. The Mayfly hatch is triggered by seasonal light intensity rather than localised weather. Expect to see the bulk of the hatch from mid afternoon in the early weeks of the hatch, spreading across the entire day in later weeks.

TACKLE TIPS

Mayfly patterns are heavy, bulky and wind resistant. Getting them to 'turn over', especially in wind can be difficult so use a 5lb tippet as a very minimum.



HATCHES

These are the four main groups to be found on the chalkstreams during May:

Mayfly

There are three species (danica, vulgata and lineata) but treat them as one. All are so large you cannot mistake them for anything else!

Nymph	Walkers Mayfly Nymph	size 12
Dun	Thomas's Mayfly	8-10
	French Partridge	10-12
	Grey Wulff	8-10
Spinner	Spent Mayfly	10



Thomas's Mayfly

Iron Blue

Good for May, September and October. Likes to hatch on cold, wet, blustery days.

Iron Blue	16
Lunn's Particular	16
Pheasant Tail Nymph	16



Iron Blue

Hawthorn & Black Gnat

Two closely related terrestrial species. Hawthorn at the start of the month, Black Gnats good for the whole month and summer.

Hawthorn	12-14
Black Gnat	16-18



Black Gnat

Shrimp

These are the commonest creatures that trout eat; if you see a trout turn on their sides and 'wriggle' along they are dislodging shrimps from the gravel bed.

Green or Pink shrimp	12-14
Sawyer's Killer Bug	14



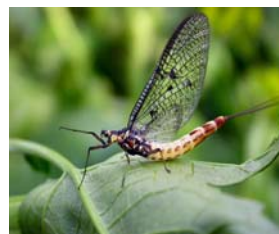
Green shrimp



Black Gnat



Iron Blue

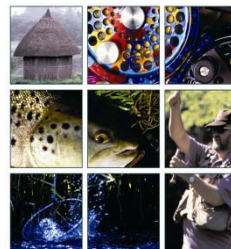


Mayfly



Spent Mayfly

JUNE FISHING ADVICE



TACTICS

After the Mayfly brace yourself for a radical re-thinking of your tactics. Identifying and matching the hatch gets harder and the fish will be more prone to focus on particular flies or a stage in their emergence.

Think harder about lighter tippets, concealment and keeping the sun to your face. Shadows and line flash will give you away in a moment. Be prepared to change your fly often; if your target fish ignores a fly more than twice, change size or fly.



Stonehenge

WEATHER

June is the month of the summer solstice (June 21) and the longest days of the year with sunrise around 5am and sunset 9pm. Given a choice between starting at daybreak or fishing at dusk, I would always choose the latter. The morning is often still a bit chilly and until the heat gets into the day the hatches will not start. Sharp, hard rain showers are a godsend on hot days. If you can bear it, fish during the rain.

TACKLE TIPS

Light tippet to 2lb. A choice of your favourite flies in a variety of sizes. Apply mud or gink on the final six inches of tippet to remove the shine'.



HATCHES

These are the five main groups to be found on the chalkstreams during June:

Blue winged olive

The definitive chalkstream fly that is the most widespread of the summer olives. The four stages in the lifecycle are all attractive to trout

Nymph	Pheasant Tail Nymph	Size 14-16
Emerger	Parachute Adams	14
Dun	Blue Winged Olive	14-18
Spinner	Sherry Spinner	16-18



Blue Winged Olive

Black Gnat

A generic name for a variety of small flat winged terrestrials that hatch in abundance. Trout will feed avidly when they get the taste for them.

Black Gnat 14-18



Black Gnat

Medium Olive

Prolific summer hatches covering a variety of species.

Parachute Adams	16
Greenwell's Glory	16
Lunn's Particular	14-16



Parachute Adams

Midges

A favourite on stillwaters but not to be ignored on rivers where the 'buzzers' are in abundance all year round.

Bloodworm	12
CDC Shuttlecock	12-14
Pheasant Tail Nymph	14-18
Knotted Midge	16-18



Knotted Midge

Sedges

There are over 30 British caddis species, but they are all fairly similar from an angler's viewpoint. A few different patterns will cover them all.

Cinnamon Sedge 10-12
Elk Hair Caddis 14
Caperer 12-14
Goddard Caddis 12-14
Grey Klinkhammer 12-14 (Emerger)



Elk Hair Caddis



Blue Winged Olive



Olive Emerger

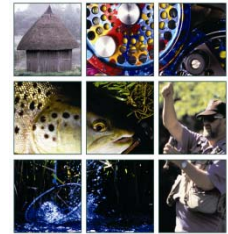


Midge



Sedge

JULY FISHING ADVICE



TACTICS

July is the month for the evening rise, probably the most regular meal-time the trout have. Even on apparently perfect fishing days flies may not hatch in the morning or afternoon, but there will usually be a rise of some sort in the evening.

You will often be fishing tiny flies that are hard to see, so be prepared to work at following them on the water. The trout have got lazy so you need to be deadly accurate with your casting and unless you can precisely track your fly you won't know whether it is covering the target fish.

A useful tip is to use the surface light of the water to pinpoint your fly. Alter the angle at which you view the water but edging left or right, crouching down or just craning your neck to change your view of the surface refraction.

WEATHER

Well it is the English summer!



TACKLE TIPS

If you have a lighter outfit this is most definitely the month to bring it out. Longer, lighter tippets for smaller flies are the order of the day. You will be fishing more small flies which are harder to tie on so don't forget a torch if you are fishing late.



HATCHES

Very similar to June, with the addition of the tiny Caenis and Winged Ants for opportunistic trout. I have added a section for the non-hatching times when you will need to turn to your nymph box.

These are the six main groups to be found on the chalkstreams during July:

Blue Winged Olive

The definitive chalkstream fly that is the most widespread of the summer olives. The three stages in the lifecycle are all attractive to trout



Sherry Spinner

Emerger	Parachute Adams	size14
Dun	Blue Winged Olive	14-18
Spinner	Sherry Spinner	16

Caenis

A catch all name for a group of tiny flies, often referred to as 'the angler's curse'. Hard to match and difficult to see on the surface, but sometimes the only fly the trout will look at for hours on end.

Last Hope 16-18
Pale Watery 18-20



Last Hope

Medium Olive

Prolific summer hatches covering a variety of species.

Parachute Adams 16
Greenwell's Glory 16
Lunn's Particular 14-16



Greenwell's Glory

Sedges

There are over 30 British caddis species, but they are all fairly similar from an angler's viewpoint. A few different patterns will cover them all.

Cinnamon Sedge 10-12
Elk Hair Caddis 14
Goddard Caddis 12-14
Grey Klinkhammer 12-14 (Emerger)



Cinnamon Sedge

Terrestrials

Ants and Daddy-Long Legs are some of the most fun patterns to fish. Ants are the less common of the two, but always carry a few because on the rare occasions a swarm gets blown onto the water the trout will go mad for them. Daddy-Long Legs are far more common (there are 300 species native to Britain) and trout view them as easy pickings. Fish this fly in the surface film rather than cocked on the surface.

Daddy-Long Legs 12
Black Ant 16



Daddy Long Legs

Nymphs

When nothing much is moving on the surface observe the fly life and match with the nymph.

Damselfly Nymph	12	Damselflies
Gold Ribbed Hare's Ear	12	Sedges
Pheasant Tail Nymph	14-16	Olives
Pink or Olive Shrimp	14	Freshwater shrimp
PVC Nymph	16	Caenis



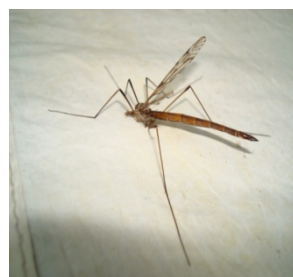
Damselfly Nymph



Caenis



Sedge



Daddy Long Legs



Damselfly Nymph

AUGUST FISHING ADVICE

TACTICS

August tends to be one of those months that gets mistakenly 'written off' by some fly fishermen as too hot, too sunny and too hard. But in truth if you are looking at a time when the rivers are at their most uncrowded and the English countryside splendid, I can't think you will do much better.

My first tip is to pare down your kit; dress for the summer on the river. If you like shorts, wear them. Get rid of that heavy waistcoat for a few essentials hung around your neck. Ditch your wellingtons for something cooler and lighter. Secondly be prepared to fish in short bursts retreating to the shade at regular intervals. Thirdly watch the sun, keeping it to your face to prevent your shadows and your line spooking the fish.

As for fly presentation this is the month I most assiduously pay attention to my tippet. If a fish comes up for a fly, but turns away this is one of the few times of the year that I will consider reducing the thickness of the tippet rather than changing the fly. Likewise I will always apply Gunk, Fullers Earth or sinkent to the final 6 inches of my tippet every time I change or re-tie my fly.

TACKLE TIPS

The two items of kit that I feel most lost without are my Polaroid's and baseball cap; I know not everyone approves of caps but the long bill multiplies the effectiveness of your sunglasses and makes fish spotting far easier. If you are not sure whether your sunglasses are polarised here is a tip to check: hold two pairs at right angles to each other up to the light. If you cannot see anything both pairs are polarised because they they block out all horizontal light.

HATCHES

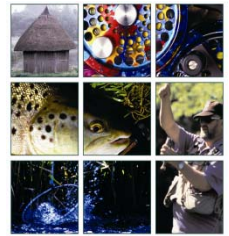
Olives, sedges and midges are the three main hatches for August. All beats now allow the nymph option, so I have added a section for the non-hatching times when you will need to turn to your nymph box.

Blue Winged Olive

The definitive chalkstream fly that is the most widespread of the summer olives. The three stages in the lifecycle are all attractive to trout.

Emerger	Parachute Adams	size 14
Dun	Blue Winged Olive	14-18
Spinner	Sherry Spinner	16

Blue Winged Olive



Medium Olive

If it is not a Blue Winged then it will be one of any of the prolific summer olive hatches covering a variety of species.

Parachute Adams	16
Greenwell's Glory	16
Lunn's Particular	14-16



Lunn's Particular

Midges

Midges or 'buzzers' are incredibly prolific and the staple for stillwater anglers, but are equally effective on rivers where they are less commonly used. Fish the bloodworm close to the river bed, but try the buzzers at varying depths.

Deep Nymph	Bloodworm	12
Common Nymph	Buzzer/Midge Pupa	14-18
Emerger	CDC Shuttlecock	14
Adult	Knotted Midge	16



Red Buzzer

Sedges

There are over 30 British caddis species, but they are all fairly similar from an angler's viewpoint. A few different patterns will cover them all.

Cinnamon Sedge	12
Elk Hair Caddis	14
Silver Sedge	12-14
Klinkhammer	14-16 (Emerger)



Klinkhammer

Terrestrials

Ants and Daddy-Long Legs are some of the most fun patterns to fish. Ants are the less common of the two, but always carry a few because on the rare occasions a swarm gets blown onto the water the trout will go mad for them. Daddy-Long Legs are far more common (there are 300 species native to Britain) and trout view them as easy pickings. Fish this fly in the surface film rather than cocked on the surface.

Daddy-Long Legs	12
Black Ant	16



Daddy-Long Legs

Nymphs

When nothing much is moving on the surface observe the fly life and match with the nymph.

Damselfly Nymph	12	Damselflies
Gold Ribbed Hare's Ear	12	Sedges
Pheasant Tail Nymph	14-16	Olives
Pink or Olive Shrimp	14	Freshwater shrimp



Green Shrimp



Bloodworm



Black Ant

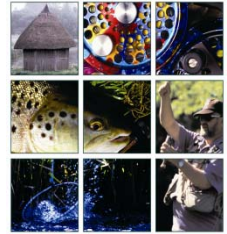


Olive Nymph



Black Sedge

SEPTEMBER FISHING ADVICE



TACTICS

In a way September is a slightly sad month as the creeping onset of autumn marks the end of summer. But for the angler the shorter days alert the fish to hard times ahead and Keats' *'season of mists and mellow fruitfulness'* becomes a time to seek out the eager feeding fish.

With the passing of the summer the mornings will have a chill to them, so there is less urgency to be on the water early or stay late. All the chalkstreams will be at their lowest level and flow rates but with no weed cuts this month expect perfect clarity and clear surfaces.

Tactically this is a month to change flies often and treat every fish on merit; there is masses of food in the river so a nymphing fish won't bother with a dry and visa versa. Likewise if they ignore your fly or take a look it is best to change immediately rather than flog away with the same pattern.



TACKLE TIPS

With so many different hatches it is not always easy to pick out the insect species. A small sampling net (there are stowaway versions) may save you hours of guesswork!



HATCHES

September is a month to see a multitude of hatches; it is common enough to see clouds of five or six different insect groups simultaneously. Top of the list are the Olives (use a Kite's Imperial), then the Baetis (Tups Indispensable) and Sedges (Caperer). You will often arrive in the morning to find nothing is happening, so take a look at the cobwebs which are the most perfect insect indicators known to man.

Large Dark Olive

After a summer break the large dark olives are back and this is a chance to use one of the modern chalkstream classics, the Kite's Imperial made famous by Olly Kite in the 1970's.



Kite's Imperial	size 14
Sawyers Pheasant Tail Nymph	14

Kite's Imperial

Pale Watery

This is an imitation to put in your box from mid-September that will stand you in good stead for the remainder of the trout season and grayling into November.

Tups Indispensable	14-16
Sherry Spinner	14-16
Parachute Adams	14-16
PVC Nymph	16



Tups Indispensable

Midges

Midges or 'buzzers' are incredibly prolific and the staple for stillwater anglers, but are equally effective on rivers where they are less commonly used. Fish the bloodworm close to the river bed, but try the buzzers at varying depths.

Deep Nymph	Bloodworm	12
Common Nymph	Buzzer/Midge Pupa	14-18
Emerger	CDC Shuttlecock	14
Adult	Knotted Midge	16



CDC Shuttlecock

Sedges

There are over 30 British caddis species, but by September you will really only put on a Caperer or maybe the Cinnamon early in the month.

Caperer	10
Cinnamon Sedge	12
Klinkhammer	16 (Emerger)
Gold Ribbed Hare's Ear	12



Caperer

Terrestrials

Ants and Daddy-Long Legs are some of the most fun patterns to fish. Ants are the less common of the two, but always carry a few because on the rare occasions a swarm gets blown onto the water the trout will go mad for them. Daddy-Long Legs are far more common (there are 300 species native to Britain) and trout view them as easy pickings. Fish this fly in the surface film rather than cocked on the surface.

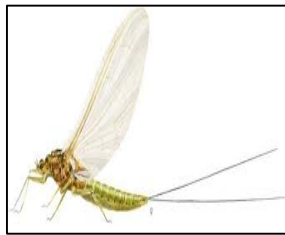
Daddy-Long Legs	12
Black Ant	16



Daddy-Long Legs



Baetis



Pale Watery

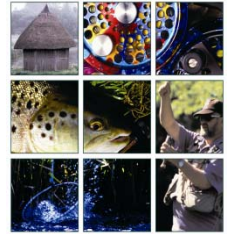


Caperer



Midge Pupa

OCTOBER FISHING ADVICE



TACTICS

There was a time when trout fishing in October was frowned upon but whether it is due to changing weather patterns or social morays times have changed and sneaking that extra last day on a crisp autumn morning always seems that little bit special.

This is the month that you will notice the trout and grayling competing for food. It will not be uncommon to see a shoal of fifteen or twenty grayling around a single trout. From the anglers point of view the competitive element can help, but shoals are easily spooked and their headlong dash up river may put down every fish in the vicinity.

With this in mind be very stealthful, casting only when necessary. Use the finest tippet and cast well upstream or away from your target fish letting the current do the rest for you.



TACKLE TIPS

It sounds a statement of the obvious but it gets dark earlier than you think. A small torch is a great help for tying on that last fly at dusk or even navigating your way around the fishing hut at going home time.



HATCHES

By October it is getting easier to match the hatch as there are fewer and fewer hatching species as we approach the end of the year.

Iron Blue

A catch all term for three different species but you will have to be a true entomological anorak to notice the difference. These are insects that like to hatch on cold, wet blustery days so ideal for the autumn.

Lunn's Particular	size 16
Iron Blue Dun	16
Sawyers Pheasant Tail Nymph	16



Iron Blue Dun

Large Dark Olive

After a summer break the large dark olives are back and this is a chance to use one of the modern chalkstream classics, the Kite's Imperial made famous by Olly Kite in the 1970's.

Kite's Imperial	14
Klinkhammer	14-16
Sawyers Pheasant Tail Nymph	14



Pheasant Tail Nymph

Pale Watery

This is an imitation to put in your box from mid-September that will stand you in good stead for the remainder of the trout season and grayling into November.

Tups Indispensable	14-16
Sherry Spinner	14-16
Parachute Adams	14-16
PVC Nymph	16



Parachute Adams

Midges

Midges or 'buzzers' are incredibly prolific and the staple for stillwater anglers, but are equally effective on rivers where they are less commonly used. Fish the bloodworm close to the river bed, but try the buzzers at varying depths.

Deep Nymph	Bloodworm	12
Common Nymph	Buzzer	14-18
Emerger	CDC Shuttlecock	14
Adult	Knotted Midge	16



Bloodworm

Shrimp

Shrimps are one of the most common creatures trout eat and about the only one they actively search for. You will see both grayling and trout rooting around at the riverbed trying to dislodge shrimps amongst the gravel.

Weighted shrimp	12-14
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Green Shrimp



Black Midge



Iron Blue

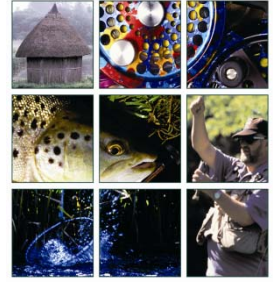


Shrimp



Olive Nymph

NOVEMBER - MARCH FISHING ADVICE



TACTICS

More than any other time of the year your fishing day will be determined by the weather or the water conditions, so you should adapt accordingly.

If the water is cloudy and the fish difficult or impossible to see then your ability to spot a 'take' becomes more important than the fly itself. I am a great believer in strike indicators, which are also an ideal way to control your fly depth. The more purist approach is of course to gink up your leader so it floats high on the surface allowing you to strike at the slightest downward twitch.

If the weather is foul in terms of wind, rain or snow then I tend to seek out the spot on the river that most protects me from the elements. I know it is a bit of a wimpy approach but you will have greater success bowing to the elements rather than fighting them.

Generally the default fly for grayling is a nymph, but even when there is snow on the ground hatches will happen, so always be ready to switch when a hatch comes on. The only two species you will see hatching around these months are olives and midges.

WEATHER

I suppose the great advantage with fishing in winter is that you expect the worst and anything else is a bonus. Fish do need to feed, though they do so at a much reduced rate. Sudden changes in the weather or water level/clarity will stop them feeding but give them a few days of settled conditions and they will be back on the hunt.

TACKLE TIPS

I tend to wear my chest waders, even on bank fishing beats. Being warm and dry, with protection from soggy banks, wet reeds, wind and rain trumps any disadvantages of having to walk in waders.



HATCHES

Only two hatches to consider during these months, namely midges and olives

Large Dark Olive

After a summer break the large dark olives are back and this is a chance to use one of the modern chalkstream classics, the Kite's Imperial made famous by Olly Kite in the 1970's.

Kite's Imperial	size 14
Klinkhammer	14 - 16
Olive Dun	14
Parachute Adams	14
Sawyers Pheasant Tail Nymph	14



Kite's Imperial

Midges

Along with the olives this is the major hatch of the month. I'll hazard that you will use the sub-surface patterns more than the dry, but you should carry all the variants. Have a variety of colours in black, green and red.

Deep Nymph	Bloodworm	12
Common Nymph	Buzzer/Midge Pupa	14 - 18
Emerger	CDC Shuttlecock	14
Adult	Knotted Midge	16



Black Buzzer

Shrimp & Water Hog Louse

Shrimps are one of the most common creatures grayling eat and the ones they actively search for. You will see them rooting around at the riverbed trying to dislodge shrimps amongst the gravel. If the fish are in the margins or shallow water they may be after hog lice; a Gold Ribbed Hare's Ear is an effective imitation.

Gold Ribbed Hare's Ear	8 -10
Weighted shrimp	12 -14



Gold Ribbed Hare's Ear



Dark Olive Nymph



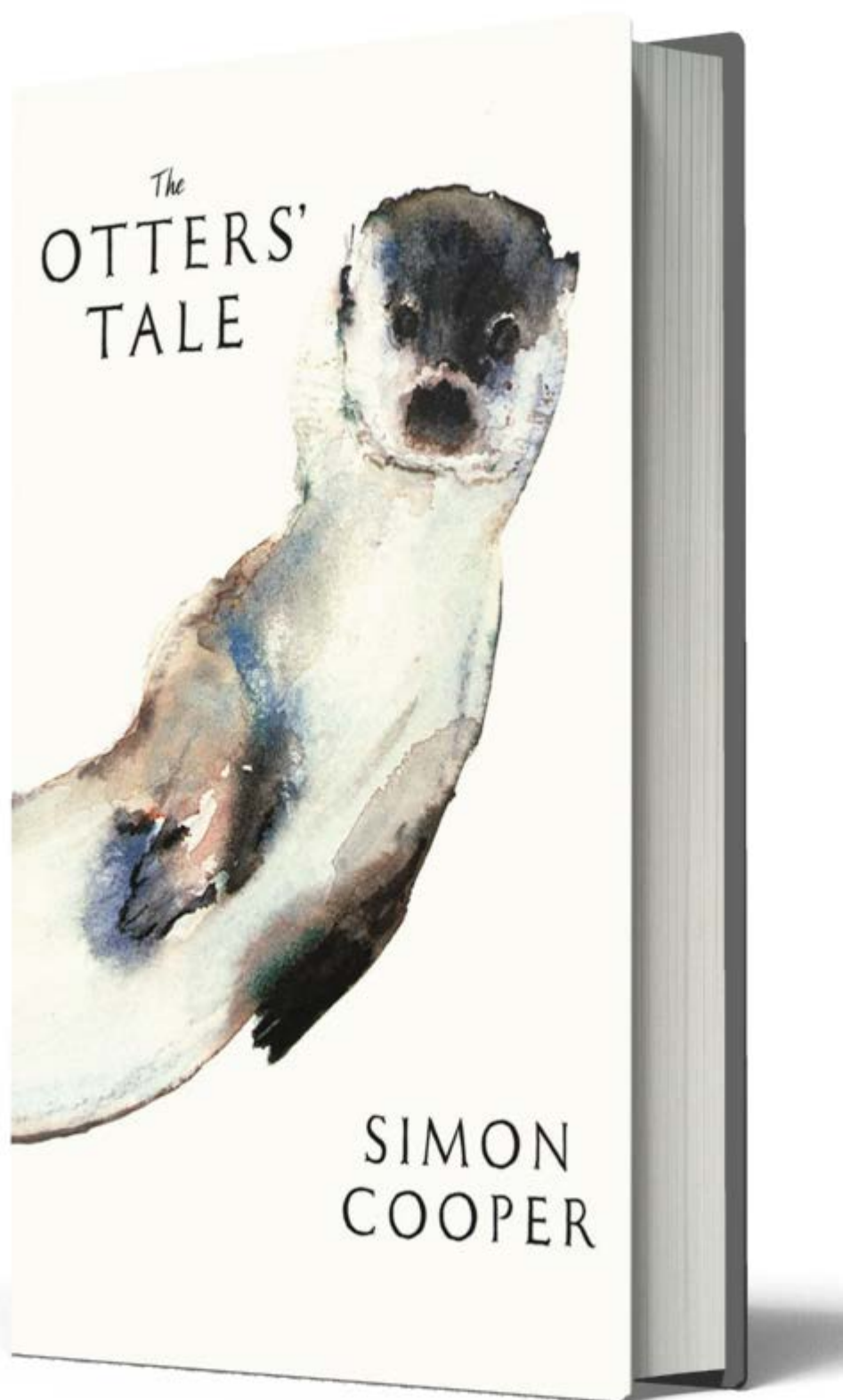
Water Hog Louse



Large Dark Olive



Midge Pupa



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IN THE BEGINNING

Opened for business in
★ 1990 ★

I ♥ FISHING 

CAUGHT & RELEASED
250,000
TROUT
& COUNTING

FISHING BREAKS ROCKS
Pioneered the
Fishing Guide Concept
to the UK

THERE IS A
RIVER NEAR
YOU 
FISHING IN 7 COUNTIES

GOING STRONG

— 27 —
SEASONS SO FAR
★ ★ ★ ★ ★  ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

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