

**WIN A  
SCHÖFFEL  
OUTFIT**  
Worth £995

# TROUT & SALMON

THE VOICE OF GAME-FISHING SINCE 1955

## Great escapes

Plan unmissable adventures with our UK destinations guide

**“Hide your  
salmon and  
whisky”**

The life and times of  
a Viking fly-fisher

**16**  
**FAULTS AND  
FIXES FOR  
WINTER  
TROUT**

**CHEWING GUM CADDIS**

Tie this deadly mouthful for trout and grayling

JANUARY 2022 £4.75 ON SALE DEC 9-JAN 5





# DRY OR DIE

Simon Cooper has had pure thoughts all year



**A**S YOU READ THIS, I WILL BE FAST arriving at the completion of a New Year's resolution I never really intended — 12 months of the dry-fly.

I've given up a lot of things in my lifetime. Smoking. Coffee. Carbonated drinks. Chocolate. Even alcohol. The last was more by error than design. I'd made a personal bet of 100 days without the booze. When day 101 arrived I thought, I rather like sobriety. That was 20 years ago and bar the odd sherry trifle not a drop has passed my lips since.

The dry or die was, like the alcohol, accidental. Now, for the most part, I'm no longer an all-day fly-fisher. I tend to head out at the moments I consider prime. The older I get the less I feel inclined to battle the elements or roll out of bed pre-dawn. I accept I'm luckier than most with the freedom to largely fish where I like when I like. It is a privilege I grasp with both hands.

In common with most reading this column I have been through the angler's evolution. First you want to catch a fish. Then lots of fish. Then big fish. Then lots of big fish. Then that fish. Before finally reaching the sunlit uplands. The Elysian Fields of fly-fishing when you fish to catch a particular fish in a particular way. And for me that way is a dry-fly cast to a rising fish.

I know this is all very Halfordian. Some would call it old school. Some snobby. But for me all other fishing is two-dimensional. Yes, sight nymphing is super cool. The drug-tug of lure fishing in freshwater or salt I am happy to say is yet to pall. But the sight, sound and feel of a fish rising to the dry is, for me, totally incomparable. It is the crack cocaine of fly-fishing. It's the biggest buzz in my life.

So, I have spent 2021 nymph and lure free and it's something I'd highly commend. To start with, it does make your fishing life a great deal simpler. I'm reduced from six fly-boxes to two. Choices are much easier. You

are not thinking in that piscatorial flow chart that has to eliminate some before choosing the other. It is not dry, nymph or lure. You simply ask, which dry?

It all began because I had one of those golden days on my first outing of the year. You know the sort. The one where, whatever you do, or however badly you do it, the fish take your fly. By default, I had tied on a Parachute Adams. I must admit I didn't think much about it beyond knowing that it was a satisfying start to the year. The next day out was more of the same and it was somewhere during that day that the worm of a dry or die year got into my brain. And it stuck.

I have, as my fishing friends will tell you, become a little obsessed by this whole pure dry thing, which has, in turn, been frustrating for guides. In Wyoming, I spied the guide rigging my rod with a Klink 'n' dink. I almost bit the poor guy's head off. We compromised with a Klink 'n' something so small and floaty I could barely see it. I think some sort of revenge on his part.

I guess what you really want to know is have I caught more or less fish? In truth, I suspect the answer is fewer. There have definitely been days when I've struggled, knowing that a nymph would have worked many times better. But I'm at ease with this. And I'm also certain that there have been many times that in persisting with a dry I have caught fish I would have otherwise given up on. Likewise, I prospected new parts of familiar streams and caught fish from sections I'd never previously considered worth attention.

So, as Big Ben chimes midnight on December 31, will I roll over my resolution to 2022? I sort of think so. ■

*Simon Cooper is managing director of Fishing Breaks (fishingbreaks.co.uk), the leading chalkstream fishing specialists. He is author of Life of a Chalkstream and The Otters' Tale.*