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FIELDSPORTS SPRING 2012 "SOMETIMES I HOPED IT WOULDN'T BE A RED LETTER DAY" PRUE COATS

THE MEMORABLE ISSUE

A feast of great sport

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BUTT OR BEACH? LORD JAMES PERCY ON THE GAME GIRL DILEMMA



TROUT FISHING



MAYFLY MAGIC

Flyfishing for a 3D age, by Simon Cooper.

You will sometimes hear it said that mayfly fishing is over-rated and too easy. If Dr. Johnson were alive I suspect he would snort into his ale, pick up his quill pen and re-write his famous quote to read: "When a man is tired of the mayfly, he is tired of life." That said it is a fair question to ask exactly why mayfly fishing exerts such a hold over us.

Some would say it is the extraordinary timing of the hatch, always arriving for the last two weeks of May and the first week of June. Others get excited at the thought of catching fish by the bucketful. But for me, and I suspect most others, it is the sheer spectacle of Mother Nature giving us a ringside seat to an extraordinary event.

As fly fishermen we know that emerging nymphs struggle in the surface film to hatch into flies. Then they sit on the surface to dry their wings before attempting to fly. Those attempts will often end in failure, plopping back on to the surface to try again. Finally safely airborne they find a mate to consummate the process. The deed done, the female swoops back to the water to lay her eggs, collapsing spent and dying in the glassy film, twitching in the last moments of her life.

We know those stages are irresistible to the hungry trout and we know that all manner of tiny aquatic insects go through exactly the same evolution. But the clue to the mayfly fascination is in the word tiny because *Ephemera Danica* is

anything but tiny. Only once a year may the angler observe the cycle of life writ so large. The mayfly hatch is entomology in 3D. Seemingly larger than life, easy to understand and easier still to imitate.

So ignore the naysayers and stock up your fly box for the mayfly and make sure you have a pattern to imitate each stage. My top picks are: The Procter Emerger for the hatching, Thomas's Yellow Mayfly for the hatched fly, French Partridge for the laying stage and Spent Mayfly for the end. All in size 10.

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