



THE CARP FRITZ

Sean Mills

My approach to fly tying is quite simple – the fly must be attractive to the fish and it needs to be quick and easy to tie. This is not set in stone but, as a general rule, it works for me. I have spent the last two decades refining this carp fly and the techniques for fishing it.

Carp can be a very difficult and challenging species to target successfully on fly. They are always suspicious, have excellent olfactory abilities, good eyesight, and fascinating body language. Once a carp is spooked or uneasy, it will not take a fly. To see it swim up to your fly, stop dead, back up and then flee the area is a sight to behold. I have not seen any other fish behave in this manner. Then, on other occasions, they will swim up to the fly, inspect it cautiously and then drift sideways beneath vegetation and slowly melt away. The sense of achievement when a carp finally takes your fly is very rewarding.

Many years ago I designed a fly, which I called the Carp Bugger that proved to be exceptionally effective. I tied the fly on strong size 10 or 8 medium shank hooks with a tail of red marabou, a body of rough black wool, a gold or silver rib and a black cock hackle as a collar. At the time brass fly tying beads were too expensive for me so I used bath chain eyes instead to provide sufficient weight to get the fly to the bottom quickly. This also flipped the fly over so that the hook point faced upwards resulting in fewer fly losses while hook-ups improved because the carp's top lip is



firmer than the bottom lip and provides a more secure hold. I caught many carp on the pattern but its disadvantage was the time that it took to tie.

Carp are attracted to the red and black combination. I think this is because midge larvae, also known as bloodworms, feature prominently in their diet. They use their large rubbery lips and sensitive barbules to root the larvae out of the sand or mud. These bloodworms are dark red and the tail of the Carp Fritz mimics this. They also like colours such as white or yellow, or black and yellow. I have had limited success on carp with flies tied in purple, brown and olive. Orange is another colour that occasionally works, but for me the black and red combination generally results in the greatest success.



The Carp Fritz was originally created by Sean Mills specifically for targeting carp in the Western Cape's waters

and before they move on. The fly must be presented as close to a feeding fish as possible without spooking it. This is the challenge of stalking this species on fly. I often use a small indicator made of yarn or floating putty – set a little deeper than the water that I am fishing – in order to indicate a take. If the indicator twitches, I strike and set the hook. If you are not sure that it is a fish then you can use a strip strike. This is enough to set the hook and if the fish has already ejected the fly or merely bumped into the line, you can let the fly sink again and, hopefully, have a second chance.

When carp are feeding in turbid water their presence is betrayed by a string of bubbles and I usually let the fly lie on the bottom for about 20 seconds before retrieving and casting over these feeding bubbles again. If I can see the carp and my fly then it is possible to judge whether the fly is in the right zone or not and if I need to recast.

Sight fishing to feeding carp is the most successful way to catch this species. However, if you can't see the fish you can rather watch for the telltale bubbles on the surface as they Hoover up food items from the detritus on the bottom. In turbid water I use a larger indicator made from orange egg yarn and cast past the bubbles drawing the fly back quickly to let it sink through them. If the indicator twitches once or twice or shoots under the water, set the hook – simple but deadly. The sense of the unknown heightens the excitement of the take when casting over feeding bubbles; is it a 3 or 15 kilogram fish? I like to use a powerful 6 weight fly rod, floating line and at least 100 metres of backing. I use Maxima

When Fritz, also known as Cactus Chenille, became available I replaced the wool body, rib and hackle with large black Fritz. This made the Carp Bugger much quicker to tie. It was an instant hit and the Carp Fritz has been my go-to fly for stalking these fish ever since. It also works well for other species like yellowfish, bluegill, mullet, dassie and moonies. Furthermore, the wider Fritz Chenille helps to push water as the pattern sinks, alerting the carp to its whereabouts even in very turbid water.

I tie some with bath chain eyes, some with 4mm brass eyes and a few with 4mm tungsten eyes for fast currents or deeper water. An important feature of any fly for stalking carp is that it needs to quickly reach the bottom where they are feeding

Peter Taljaard



Ultragreen when constructing my carp leaders. The formula is: 1 metre of .45mm and 30cm of .35mm Maxima which ends with a Perfection Loop Knot.

To this section, using a loop-to-loop connection, I attach 1 to 2 meters of .25mm Maxima Ultragreen depending on how deep the water is. There are many makes of specialist fly tippet available and you can use your own favourite brand but ensure that, like Maxima Ultragreen, it is abrasion resistant. If you want to use tippets of finer diameter then you can boil a Maxima leader to make it more elastic and thus more shock-absorbent. However, when using a .25mm 3.5 kilogram tippet for carp, this is unnecessary. If I am fishing close to snags then I will increase the tippet breaking strain by using .30mm Maxima. Sometimes you will foul hook a carp, especially if there are a lot feeding in the same area. They usually come off leaving a telltale scale behind on your fly. If you hook one accidentally in the tail, well let's just say the definition of stalemate in the dictionary comes to mind.

To land and release carp as quickly and gently as possible I like to use a large, long-handle folding net with a soft mesh.

Because you stalk these fish in snaggy situations and the fly often ends up lying on the bottom, fly losses are a regular occurrence which is why the Carp Fritz needs to be easy and quick to tie.

The hook must be sharp in order to penetrate quickly and hold securely in the carp's rubbery mouth. You often have only a split second to set the hook before it spits out the fly which is why ultra-sharp hook points are imperative. Barbless hooks enhance penetration and reduce fish injury. Hooks for the Carp Fritz must also be strong because fish of up to 10 kgs are not uncommon

and they are exceptionally powerful. I also like to off-set the hook point to the left or right in order to aid hooking ability when the carp sucks in the fly. This little tip can make a significant difference to your success rate.

Dressing

Hook: Heavy wire, size 8 medium shank (Grip 12003 or Grip 21711-NSL)

Thread: Black 6/0

Bead: 4mm brass or tungsten bead or bath chain

Body: Black Estaz, Ice Chenille or Crystal Chenille (I like the body to be quite bulky so I often use medium or large chenille)

Tail: Red marabou (same length as the hook shank).