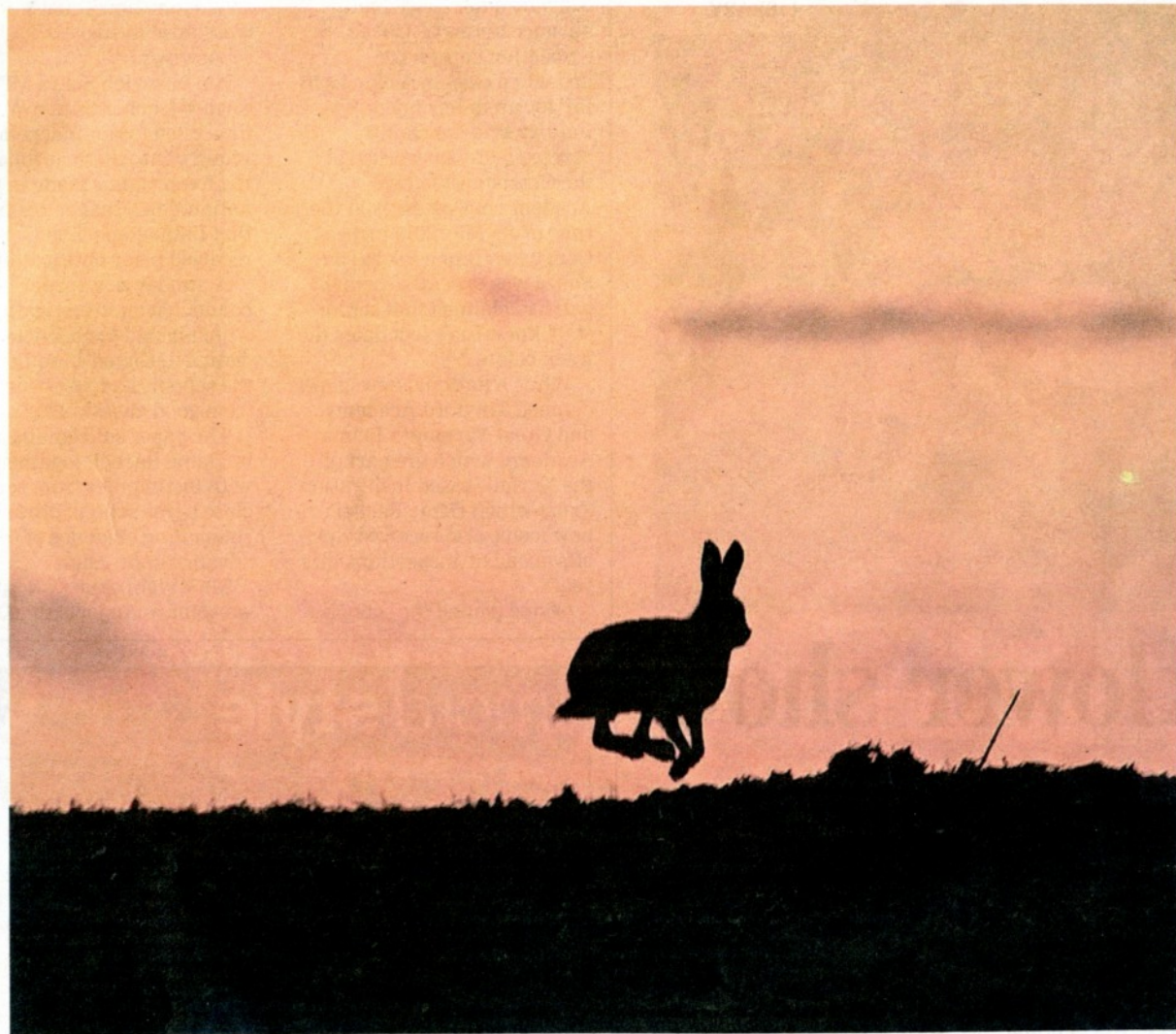


One photographer, the four seasons and a whole host of hares



■ Stunning skies and frosty fields in North Norfolk provide the perfect backdrop for Martin Hayward Smith's photographs of hares from his new book. Pictures: MARTIN HAYWARD SMITH



Photographer's walk on the wild side

Having been born in Norfolk, Martin Hayward Smith went on to join the Navy and work in the oil industry before turning to photography as a career. After gaining a distinction in photography at Southport College of Art he headed back to Norfolk for a commission at Pensthorpe Waterfowl Park, now Pensthorpe Natural Park, before joining Anglia Television's Survival team. This led him around the world from the crocodile caves of Madagascar to the Amazon

basin. He has worked on Sir David Attenborough's Life of Birds, the Living Britain series and the Natural World programmes. He has also been involved with TV series featuring Bill Oddie, Alan Titchmarsh and Jimmy Doherty. Mr Hayward Smith worked with Ray Mears on Wild Britain and most recently on the BBC2 series The Burrowers. Among the places and environments he has worked in are the jungle in Ghana, The

Great Barrier Reef, Yellowstone National Park in the USA, the Arctic Circle and Madagascar. He said: "When you are in the Arctic with the wind cutting across you and you can feel the ice flow moving under your feet you think 'this is really on the edge' but the landscapes are absolutely amazing. "It is the same in Oman in the desert, the Wahiba Sands, the sunsets and sun rises are amazing, then you see a camel train coming through and it is just magical."

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Martin Hayward Smith has worked all over the world from the steamy jungles of the Amazon to hot sun of the desert, but his latest book follows his journey through the fields of North Norfolk.

My Year With Hares combines breathtaking photography with the tales of how Mr Hayward Smith got close to the creatures.

After being commissioned to film hares for a foreign television company, Mr Hayward Smith decided to continue the project for a full year to capture hares in every season.

He said: "Hares are very appealing, very iconic."

"I remember the first time I saw one when I was a small child walking across the stubble fields on a local farmer's shoot. Suddenly this large mammal jumped up from under me and bounded off across the field. I don't know who was more startled."

"You are always seeing hares whether you are driving or on the train and I think that just adds to the interest. I was taking stills as well during the commission and I just thought 'this is something I have always wanted to do'."

"Sometimes you would come back with nothing at all in the can. Sometimes you would go out and they would be charging round the fields"

Martin Hayward Smith

Mr Hayward Smith spent the year in various spots in a triangular area between Holkham, the Barshams and Burham Market, covering more than 1,000 acres.

Like most wildlife photography the project involved finding a spot out of sight and down wind, then waiting patiently.

"Sometimes you would come back with nothing at all in the can," said Mr Hayward Smith.

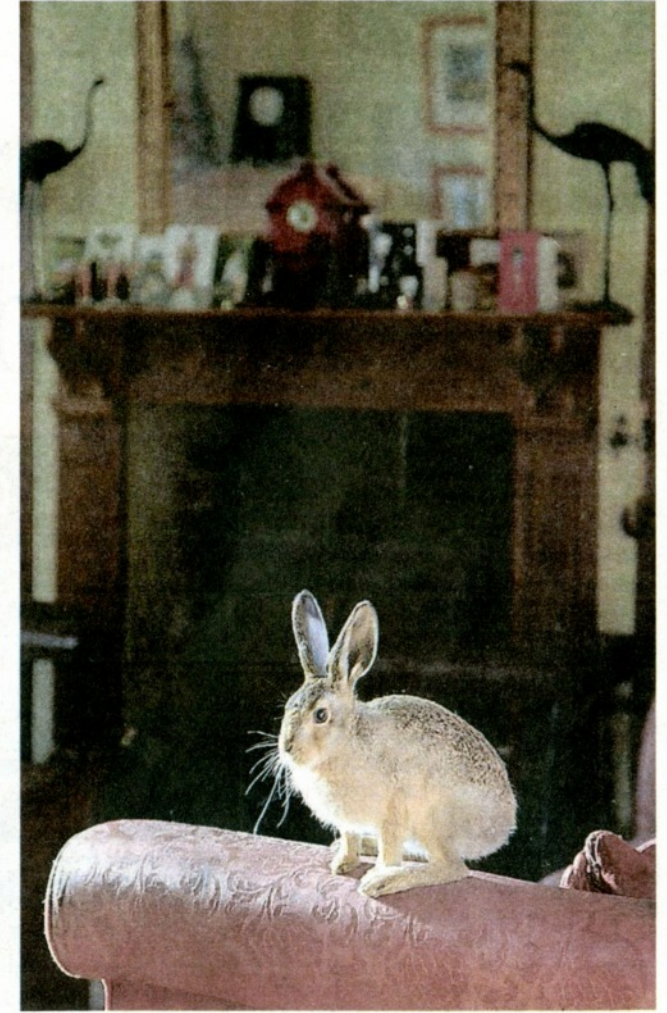
"Sometimes you would go out and they would be charging around the fields."

Although he has travelled the globe, Mr Hayward Smith's love for North Norfolk and the area around his home in East Barsham has not abated.

He said: "It is fantastic to be doing something on your own doorstep and being able to put something back in there. To be able to make people aware of the animals around them and what the species needs is great."

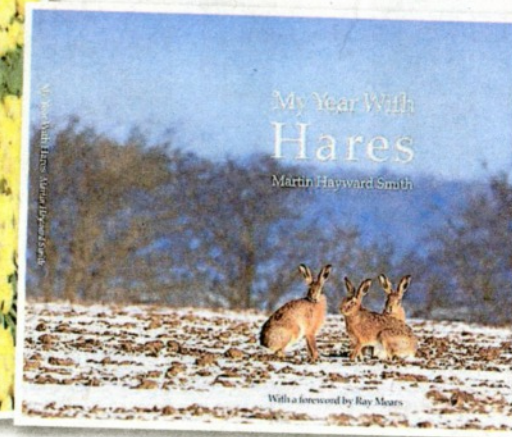
The book has a foreword from survival expert Ray Mears, who Mr Hayward Smith worked with on the television series Wild Britain.

As well as following the seasonal journeys of hares, the book also follows Mr Hayward Smith in his attempts to picture the elusive blue hare. He said: "I was told there was a



■ Boxing clever with giant hares and exploring the bright colours of a tulip field. Just some of the images from My Year With Hares, Martin Hayward Smith's new book (pictured below). Above right, Mr Hayward Smith rescued a baby hare, which he called Harlene. She lived in his home until she was strong enough to be returned to the wild.

Pictures: MARTIN HAYWARD SMITH



blue hare, which is like the Holy Grail of hares.

"Blue is what they call a certain colouration, it is kind of silvery coloured. Once I heard that it became my challenge to find it."

Another remarkable strand of the tale sees the photographer get closer on to one young hare than he would have expected.

Mr Hayward Smith rescued a baby hare that he discovered during one of his trips. Naming her Harlene, she lived in his home for about a month and a half before he returned her to

the wild when she was strong enough. "That was a bit of a wrench but it had to be done," he said. "When I first

"I was told there was a blue hare, which is like the Holy Grail of hares.... Once I heard that it became my challenge to find it"

Martin Hayward Smith

took her in I swore she would not go upstairs but soon she was bounding up and down and eventually she ended up sleeping under my bed.

"She had to go back to the wild it is where she belonged."

■ To find out more about Mr Hayward Smith's work or to buy his book visit www.martinhaywardsmith.com

■ Have you had a book published? Email Doug Faulkner at doug.faulkner@archant.co.uk