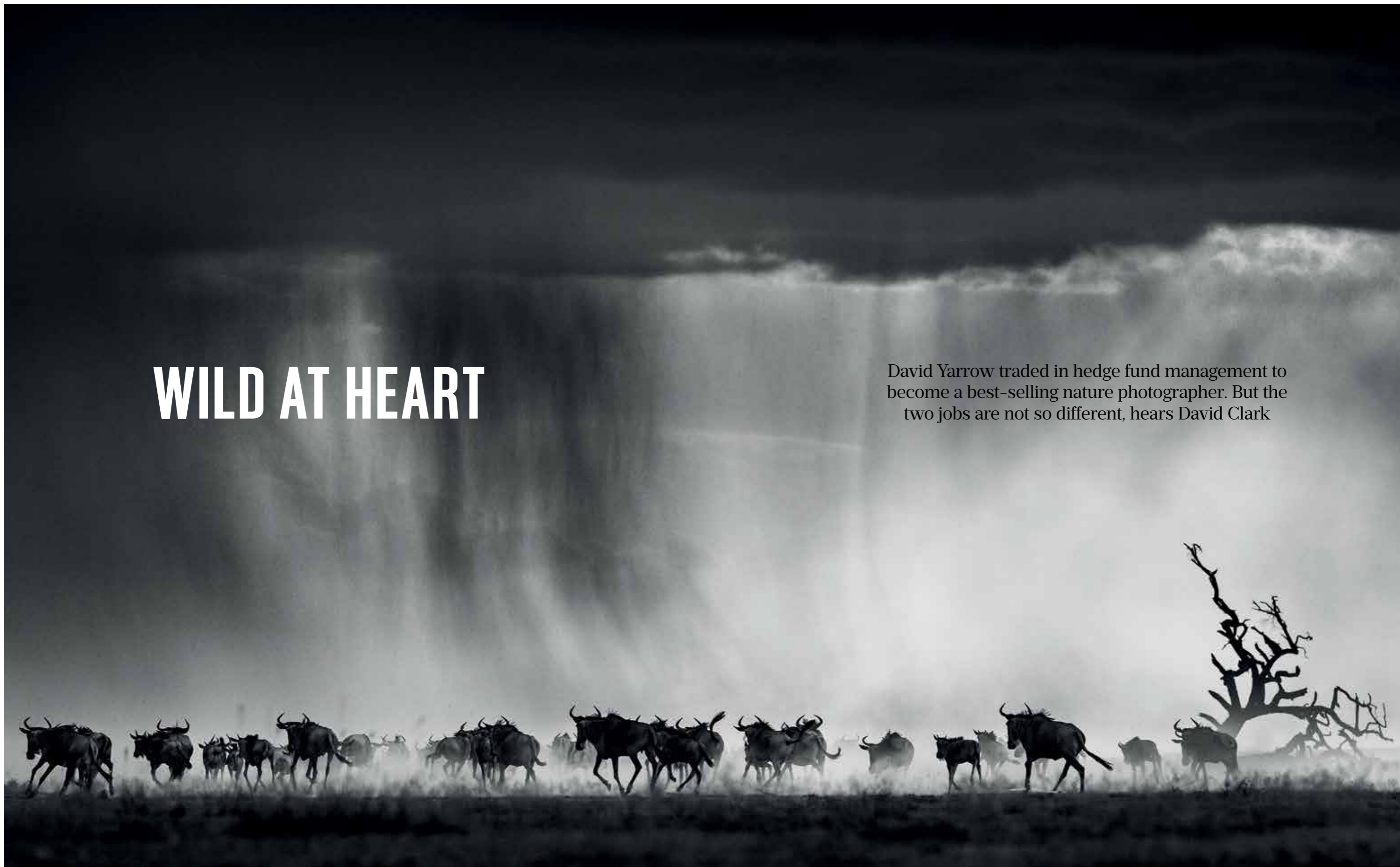


# WILD AT HEART

David Yarrow traded in hedge fund management to become a best-selling nature photographer. But the two jobs are not so different, hears David Clark



**EXODUS**  
Amboseli, Kenya, 2015

PREVIOUS PAGE

'The wildebeest is an animal that most people don't find attractive in itself, but here it's combined with bad weather conditions to tell a story. I was in Amboseli late one afternoon and it was

clear from the menacing sky that a huge storm was coming. I got out of my vehicle and shot towards the shafts of light through the falling rain. Although the herd of wildebeest was running away from the camera it gave the foreground interest I need.'



**LION KING**  
Dinokeng, South Africa, 2014

ABOVE

'I wanted to take a picture underneath a jumping lion. Working with Kevin Richardson, the animal behaviourist known as the 'lion whisperer', I set up a situation in which the lion was encouraged to jump over a muddy stream. I was in a cage and my camera was in the water, fitted with a 35mm lens. The shutter was triggered with a PocketWizard remote. Just after this frame was shot, the lion carried the camera away and partly ate it. Luckily, the flash card was fine.'

**F**ive years ago, David Yarrow took an image that changed his life. On a trip to South Africa, he photographed a shark attacking a seal. Although published internationally, after subtracting the cost of the trip he calculated it cost him \$2,000 to produce. 'At that point,' he says, 'I felt I had inadvertently created the world's worst business model.'

However, six months later a Texan attorney nicknamed 'Jaws' saw the picture, phoned him and asked how much he would charge for a framed print for his office. Yarrow plucked a figure out of the air: \$6,000. Without hesitation, 'Jaws' said he would have three of them. 'That was when the penny dropped,' he says.

Since then he has rapidly built an extraordinary body of nature and landscape work. Last year, he sold his financial business, Clareville Capital, to



**THE WOLF OF MAIN STREET**  
Montana, USA, 2015

ABOVE

'Although staged, I think this is one of my strongest images. After a day filming with a wolf in the mountains of Montana we found the quintessential American bar. I asked the owner if he minded me bringing the wolf in, then I asked if I could put it on the counter. I put chicken fillets either side of my neck, and lay with my camera pointing at the wolf as it came towards me. The ambient light wasn't great so I had minimal depth of field to work with. I got this after several attempts.'



**JAWS**  
False Bay, South Africa, 2011

LEFT

'I got fascinated by photographing sharks and spent a lot of time in South Africa with the aim of getting shots of them predated. They mainly feed on seals in the early morning, so I went out in a boat at 6am for several days. The chances of seeing it were not high and my friends thought I was nuts to even try it. After nine days in the boat I got this. I got quite emotional about it when I downloaded the picture. The gratifying thing, as a former sports photographer, is that it's pin sharp.'



**HEAVEN CAN WAIT**  
Amboseli, Kenya, 2014

LEFT  
'I got the clue for this from my 10-year-old son, who took a picture of a giraffe and I saw how the sun was lighting up its footprints in the dust. So we built an extension to the jeep's side that allowed me to go out on to a ladder and we went giraffe chasing in the final half-hour of the day. It was full-on intense; the car doing 40mph, the giraffe running at 40mph and me holding the camera with my head one foot from the dirt.'

**MANKIND III**  
Yirol, South Sudan, 2014

BELOW  
'South Sudan is still recovering from a civil war; it's a dangerous place where people have a lot of guns. Some 200 miles north of the capital, Juba, is one of the biggest cattle camps in the world. It's very hard to reach and I was the first person to photograph it. The landscape is flat, so I took a ladder to get the elevation to make the picture go on ... It is like Dante's Hell, yet with a calm serenity to it.'

**NUTS**  
Kalimantan, Borneo, 2016

ABOVE  
'Jungles are the hardest places to do close-up, immersive animal photography. Humidity causes condensation in the cameras and light levels are often low. This is taken in an orangutan conservation area. To get close enough to this male there was no option but to get wet and I had to stand in swamp water up to my chest. I had some peanuts to get his attention and this was taken as he lunged forward.'

## 'I NOW WINCE AT SOME OF THE THINGS I WROTE, BUT I WAS RIGHT ABOUT THE ONLY WAY TO MAKE PROPER MONEY'

focus on photography and is now one of the world's highest-earning fine-art nature photographers.

Although the 50-year-old Glasgow-born photographer was in finance for nearly 30 years, including spells as a stockbroker, sports photography was his first love. Named Young Scottish Photographer of the Year at the age of 20, he photographed the 1986 World Cup for *The Times* and the winter Olympics for the Allsport agency while still a student at the University of Edinburgh.

After graduation, he was offered a job by Allsport but his father, a former chairman of Yarrow Shipbuilders, opposed his son working as a 'snapper'. A career in banking followed, but he maintained his passion for photography, believing the two occupations aren't as different as most people imagine.

'Photography is about access,' he says. 'It's about logistical research, homework and putting yourself in a position so that when it matters you use your experience with precision. My job in finance was to research key things and know them better than anyone else. That's actually not very different from doing your homework on knowing how to take a picture of an elephant in Africa.'

He reacted to an 'emotional divorce' in 2006 by photographing landscapes in countries including Greenland, Iceland and Chile. This work resulted in his first book, *Nowhere* (2007). However, following the success of his shark picture, he concentrated on building a fine-art nature photography business alongside his fund-management work.

Applying his financial brain to the photography market, in 2012 he wrote a discussion paper titled *The smart way to monetise strong photography*. It included an analysis of the business models of the two most successful photographers in his field at the time, Nick Brandt and Peter Lik.

'That paper annoyed a lot of people,' he admits. 'I now wince at some of the things I wrote, but I was right: the only way to make proper money is to go via the fine-art market. Since then it's been a journey and I've been fairly relentless in pursuing this objective.'

Yarrow's 'brand' is all about creating powerful, striking images that celebrate the beauty of the natural world. He prefers shooting from low angles, often by lying flat on the ground, and his frequent use of wide-angle lenses gives his wildlife photographs a visceral, immersive quality.





**KING KONG**  
Volcanoes National Park, Rwanda, 2011

LEFT  
'Taking pictures of mountain gorillas in Rwanda is very difficult. Their natural habitat is very heavily vegetated and it's pot luck as to whether the gorillas are in the open. If they're not in the open, they're less likely to do something, so I've mainly been restricted to studies of them, such as facial details. In this image, the expression on this adult male's face is what makes the picture. He's looking at me with utter contempt, as if he's saying: "Get out of my life, you insignificant little person."'



**EASTER SUNDAY**  
Kibbish, Ethiopia, 2013

LEFT  
'The Suri tribe lives in the west of Ethiopia, near the Sudanese border. This is obviously a staged picture, and staging people when you don't know the language and there are lots of kids running around can be a challenge. I needed their cooperation, so I had to know what to give them. I had done my homework and found that the tribe, bizarrely, really like Bic razors, because they do lots of creative things with their hair. They also like Bic pens, so I also arrived with plenty of those to give. It was taken on Easter Sunday 2013.'

**'MAYBE IT'S INSECURITY THAT MAKES ME ALWAYS WANT TO DO BETTER ...'**

When dealing with dangerous animals, he often places his camera in the open and fires the shutter with wireless remote triggers while he's at a safe distance in a vehicle or metal cage. This approach has created intimate images, but it's also resulted in expensive cameras being kicked by elephants or half-eaten by lions. However, as a Nikon ambassador, his kit is supplied and repaired by the company.

His skill, energy and determination have brought great success in a short time, but he continually aims to make even greater images. 'Right now, I sell more of my genre than anyone else in the world,' he says. 'Do I get high on that? No, I just want to continue being the best I can be. I think I can build a legacy in terms of taking important and relevant pictures, as well as pictures that are aesthetically strong and as perfect as they can be.'

'I'm very tough on myself and there's a relentlessness in my approach. Maybe it's insecurity that makes me always want to do better. In finance there were always people who were better than me and that wasn't going to change. That still happens but in what I'm doing now I don't feel that quite so strongly. I feel if I do the best I can, it's other people who are looking at me. It's more in my hands this time around.'

*Wild Encounters: Iconic Photographs of the World's Vanishing Animals and Cultures* by David Yarrow is published by Rizzoli. Signed copies, which include a limited-edition print, can be purchased from [davidyarrow.photography](http://davidyarrow.photography), price £100. All of Yarrow's author royalties from the book go to the Tusk Trust charity.



**IGLOOLIK**  
Nunavut, Canada, 2013

LEFT  
'This is a very simple portrait of Simon Qamanirg, while he was building our igloo in northern Nunavut. Igloolik is the last place where the Inuit wear a little bit of traditional clothing, rather than going around in North Face. For me, the picture shows the power of working with a prime wide-angle lens, close to the subject. It was very cold, which shows in the frost on his face, and when it's a big print you can see every little detail. This trip was the only time to date that I've had frostbite.'

**MY PLACE OR YOURS**  
Kaktovik, Alaska, 2016

ABOVE  
'Due to global warming, polar bears are increasingly hanging around human communities for food while they wait for the sea to freeze. So there's a greater proximity between bears and people, and I wanted to convey that in an image. I had to take it at a time when it was dark enough to include the lights in the village, but light enough to take a sharp picture. To me, the bear's nose and face are perfectly positioned – you can see it is smelling the air as the wind blows. I think it's a very special image.'