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are changing. The light is softer, you get the first mists, cobwebs and dew. I keep myself going through work and everything else that's going on in life, for my two weeks off in October watching the rut. If only you could bottle that sense of atmosphere.'

And, although his focus is deer, nature often offers up something else too. 'You never know what else you're going to see. Out on the Levels it's kingfishers and barn owls. Up on the hills, buzzards and kestrels. On Exmoor you have the hen harrier.'

Over the years, his drive to capture the perfect image means he has taken thousands of photographs. 'A good picture is like a good cake – you need all the ingredients, the light, good background, something happening, an extra bit of magic, the drama of a fight or roaring. A bit of action. You're looking for that wow factor.'

But his personal favourites aren't necessarily the most obvious ones, they're often the ones with a story behind them. 'Each photo takes on a different representation of a different moment. It might not necessarily be a great photo, but I know it took an extraordinary effort to get close to a particular stag. Certain circumstances just make that whole experience stand out.'

'I have one photo of a beautiful stag, with perfectly shaped antlers. He'd gone off the hill and into the woods, with his group of hinds. The hinds were playing, and I spent the whole day next to that group of deer. That's a favourite photo.'

There was a time in Matt's life when he considered doing photography full time. 'There was a point about 15 or 20 years ago when I was keen to go professional and I felt like I had to get a picture and I was focussed on getting something that was sellable.'

In the end, though, he chose to keep photography as something he does to unwind from his busy day job, running a land management company. 'When I go out with my camera, I escape from everything else in life, all my clients who are chasing me, the traffic, everything else, you switch off and concentrate on trying to get a picture or enjoying the moment in what seems to be a busier and busier world.'

'A lot of the time these days I'm not even that worried about getting the shot. I'd rather immerse myself and enjoy the atmosphere, the drama or whatever else is going on. When I see Big George and he's looking right at the camera, I'm almost happy not to take the photo and just say, "Hi George".' ●



PHOTO: MATT TREASTER