



# Robson Green

The actor and presenter of *Extreme Fishing* is happiest participating in some form of fieldsport, though when it comes to cage-fighting he is just an observer. By **Charlotte Reather**. Photograph by **Giles Park**

I first bumped into Robson Green at a cage-fighting event at the Radisson Edwardian Hotel, Heathrow, as you do. Through the throng of Kappa-clad meatheads and orange, plastically enhanced strippers, I spied the handsome actor. I knew he was a keen fisherman and after preparing a line in my best Geordie accent – which went something like “Show mi yer rod and I’ll show yer mi scampi, like,” I deftly secured an interview.

We meet at the Talbot Inn in Ripley, Surrey near his home that he shares with his wife Vanya, son Taylor and stepdaughter Lara. Robson orders a light lunch – he’s in training for the role of a male escort in a forthcoming ITV drama, *Trade*. “It’s highly sexual so I need to be ripped.” He smiles at me; I go all unnecessary. This angler doesn’t need bait to reel in his prey – he could just hypnotise it with his piercing blue eyes.

The 44-year-old actor was taught to fish in Northumberland by his uncle, Matheson Green, when he was a boy. “I’d done a lot of trout and salmon fishing before working on *Extreme Fishing*. I fancied myself as a bit of an expert – how wrong I was!”

Initially when Robson was asked to present the Five programme he turned the opportunity down. “I’m an actor, not a presenter. But when the producer said, ‘Do you want to go round the world, meet interesting people, try extreme methods of fishing in extreme places with extreme species of fish and get paid a lot of money?’ I said, ‘Does Barbara Cartland wear make-up? Sign me up!’

“I’m rubbish at fishing but I really enjoy it. I think the viewers tap into that – I’m the underdog and it’s about the challenge. The show has taken me to Costa Rica, South Africa, New Zealand and the Philippines and I’ve tried some seriously strange methods of angling. One of the most ridiculous was kite-fishing. Basically, the bait hangs down from the kite and can go much farther than you can cast it, up to 2km out. We were with a German-Irish-Kiwi guy who was an expert. We sat there for

eight hours and nothing. The more worried he got, the more German he became. Then the line snapped and we took another two hours to retrieve it. I said to him, ‘Have you got a girlfriend? No? I’m not surprised, this is a bloody disaster!’ In the end we did catch something but it wasn’t my cup of tea.”

Back in British waters, Robson enjoys two miles of single-bank fishing on the River Coquet. “I fish to wind down. I’ve spent 26 years of my life putting on make-up in a caravan and playing characters and there’s a kind of schizophrenia to it. But when I fish, walk or shoot, I’m me, I’m Robson. It’s the only thing that makes sense. Fishing is very good for you, psychiatrists recommend it.”

And it’s something Robson’s son has taken a shine to. “I took Taylor to a local lake to teach

but I didn’t want to put it back, I wanted to feed the whole village but our guide said no. It weighed 600lb and was exhausted. When a fish is exhausted it sends out distress signals that predators pick up, leaving it vulnerable. You’ve got to be careful.”

Robson’s views on catch-and-release have sparked controversy in recent months, setting many in the angling community against him. “Apparently, I’m no longer an ambassador for fishing, which is sad, but it’s fine because I stand by my comments on coarsing. I believe putting a fish back beyond recovery after having your picture taken is wrong. I don’t get it. For me fishing is hunting. It’s about food.

“People can romanticise and wax lyrical about fishing as much as they like but in no way is this view shared by the fish. When it’s out of water it’s not where it wants to be. I never go fishing on a full stomach when we film the show – I want to eat what I catch. That’s my opinion and what I prefer.”

Robson enjoys shooting and has enjoyed days on the Mitford Estate in Morpeth as well as various let days. “I like the experience. For me it’s not about the gun or

how many birds you shoot, it’s about how you feel. I love the connection with nature, the fresh air and the euphoria of getting your quarry. I think it goes back to our forefathers when if you didn’t go back with a bird or fish, you didn’t eat. Eating what you’ve caught tastes better and you appreciate it more.”

Robson is very connected to his native Northumbria and, he assures me, is more likely to be found at a local point-to-point than a cage-fighting do. “My father wanted me to be a jockey but it didn’t work out that way. I sponsor local point-to-points and used to own a racehorse, but that’s as close I’ve come to a career in racing.”

So we should thank our lucky stars Robson didn’t become a jump jockey or we might have been robbed of the Nineties pop sensation Robson and Jerome and their classic remake of *Unchained Melody*... ■

“Do you want to go round the world, try extreme fishing and get paid lots of money? Does Barbara Cartland wear make-up?”

him the basics of fly-fishing. On his second cast he caught a 10½lb rainbow trout, which broke the record for that lake. The elderly lady who had previously held the record for 10 years stared in astonishment at the fish. Through gritted teeth she congratulated Taylor on his achievement but not long afterwards was found sobbing in a heap. It’s absolutely true. She was devastated!”

Is Robson a salmon or trout man? “I’m not a purist, I’m a fisherman. I enjoy both. But to watch a fly-fisherman is like Yeats, it’s poetry. I get really emotional when I see the most beautiful Spey cast or when a guy catches a salmon on a cast that deserves a fish”. I venture his favourite film is *A River Runs Through It*. It is.

“The best book about fishing is Hemingway’s *The Old Man and the Sea*. It’s about this old Cuban fisherman’s struggle with a giant marlin. In the programme, we caught a marlin