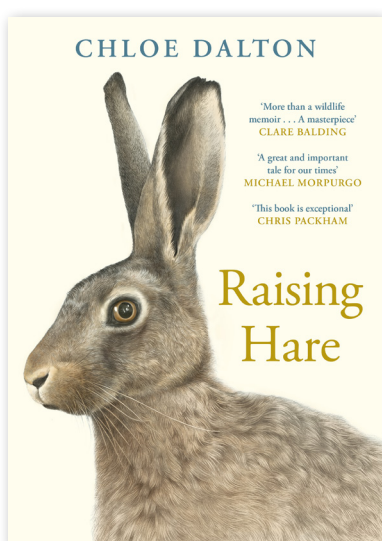


Raising Hare

by Chloe Dalton



PLOT SUMMARY

When lockdown led busy professional Chloe to leave the city and return to the countryside of her childhood, she never expected to find herself custodian of a newly-born hare. Yet when she finds the creature, endangered, alone and no bigger than her palm, she is compelled to give it a chance at survival.

Raising Hare chronicles their journey together, the challenges of caring for the leveret and preparing for its return to the wild. We witness first-hand an extraordinary relationship between human and animal, rekindling our sense of awe towards nature and wildlife. This improbable bond of trust serves to remind us that the most remarkable experiences, inspiring the most hope, often arise when we least expect them.

WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR

Chloe Dalton's writing in *Raising Hare* sings with a beautiful combination of precision and sense detail that involves the reader in the story of Hare with immediacy and empathy, but never compromises on the facts. There is, in fact, a delicate balance here between beautiful sense detail – the house smelled faintly like digestive biscuits: the scent of hares' and the more practical information, such as what hares eat, how large they grow and how fast they can run.

This is a memoir, not a factual textbook about hares, and, as such, takes a holistic approach to Dalton's whole experience of living with Hare as opposed to observing her in isolation. We learn what is going on in Dalton's life during her relationship with Hare – lockdown, a return to work, interacting with friends and family, even her deciding to get rid of her old sofa – as much as we learn about Hare and her habits. In so doing, the reader observes a communal existence between woman and hare that is at once moving and enlightening.

“Meticulously researched and superbly written, this book combines the author’s expertise with the emotional resonance of the subject to bring together an extraordinary story.”

DR ELIZABETH-JANE BURNETT,
2025 JUDGE



Shortlist
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By living alongside Hare, Dalton is able to witness behaviours and parts of Hare’s being that seem to have rarely been observed before: any supposed facts she has read about hares turn out to be untrue, from their drinking habits to maternal behaviours. Dalton presents her account of her days with Hare to the reader with poetic lyricism which is nonetheless rooted in the practical.

DISCUSSION POINTS

When Dalton returns from the vet with medicine for Hare, she says:

‘I pondered the concept of ‘owning’ a living creature in any context. Interaction with animals nurtures the loving, empathetic, compassionate aspects of human nature. It taps into a primordial reverence toward the living world and a sense of the commonality and connectedness across species. It is a gateway, as I was discovering, into a state of greater respect for nature and the environment as a whole. But at the same time, there is an immense power imbalance. We all too easily subordinate animals to our will, constraining or confining them to suit our purposes, needs and lifestyles.’

What is the difference between a pet and Dalton’s relationship with Hare? How are both of those relationships different again to, for example, a farmer’s livestock, or horses at a riding stable? How effective do you think Dalton was in her aim of keeping Hare wild? Can animals ever be truly owned? Should they be? Has this book made you feel differently about the concept of keeping animals as pets?

QUESTIONS

Dalton describes ‘a new spirit of attentiveness to nature’ as a result of being with Hare. Have you ever experienced something like this yourself? Did you relate to this feeling in the book from the Covid-19 lockdown?

Did you find *Raising Hare* to be an emotional read? Did you chuckle at times, or find it sad, heartwarming, or adorable? Why, or why not?

What was your view about the ways Dalton talked about farming practices in her area, like hedge cutting, or the use of tractors? Did you agree, or do you have a different view?

Dalton says: ‘I had rediscovered the pleasure of attachment to a place and the contentment that can be derived from exploring it fully, rather than constantly seeking ways to leave it and believing that satisfaction can only lie in novel experiences.’ Do you think we are, as a society, too focused on ‘novel experiences’? Should we care for our immediate environments more?

If you enjoyed this book try some of our recommended reads on the next page.

NEXT STEPS

Write a poem inspired by Denise Nestor's beautiful illustrations of hares on the endpapers, cover and chapter headings in *Raising Hare*. Knowing what you now know about hares, how will you choose to present one in lyrical, sensory language? Remember to try and evoke all the senses as Dalton does so expertly in her descriptions of Hare, the weather and her local natural environment.

Alternatively, research some of the old legends about hares that Dalton refers to, from their links with witches and the moon to their connections with madness – the 'Mad March Hare'. Are there one of these legends that inspire you to write a story or even come up with a concept for a novel? What about the tale of Isobel Gowdie, who claimed to be able to turn into a Hare? Is there an interesting idea here when we think about the transformative powers of living close to nature – which certainly transformed Dalton's life? ■

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Chloe Dalton is a writer, political adviser and foreign policy specialist. She spent over a decade working in the UK Parliament and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. She divides her time between London and her home in the English countryside. *Raising Hare* is her first book. It was selected as Hay Festival Book of the Year 2024, shortlisted for Waterstones Book of the Year and a Critics Best Books pick for *The Times*, *Financial Times*, *Guardian*, *Spectator* and *iNews*.



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Shortlist
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RECOMMENDED READS

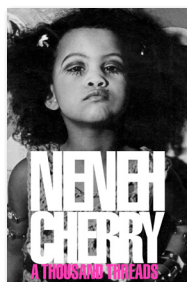
In *A Wilder Way: How Gardens Grow Us*, Poppy Okotcha presents a memoir of a relationship with an ever-changing garden and of how tending to a patch of land will not only grow us as individuals, but can also help to grow a better world.

In *Windswept: Life, Nature and Deep Time in the Scottish Highlands*, Annie Worsley trades a busy life in academia to take on a croft on the west coast of Scotland, and explores what it means to live in this rugged, awe-inspiring place of unquenchable spirit and wild weather.

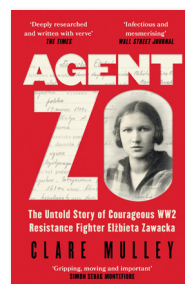
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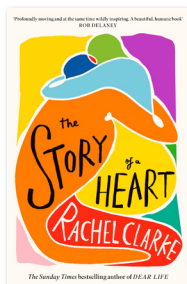
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