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NEED FOR SPEED Andy with peregrine

SUPER

Bomb disposal expert pushes limits feats of animals.. but don't call him

Telly action man Andy Torbet refuses to describe his job as dangerous.

For his latest series, Andy has been filmed holding his breath while diving under giant icebergs, plunging head first from a plane with jet rockets attached to his legs, going jaw to jaw with the world's fastest shark and even being engulfed in a burning fireball.

But the former paratrooper and army bomb disposal commander says it's nothing compared to military service in Afghanistan and Bosnia.

And while others might describe him as a daredevil, he is no adrenaline junkie.

Andy, 41, who was in the Army for 10 years, said: "When you have been sent to Afghanistan to defuse bombs, it gives you a different perspective on what a dangerous job actually is.

"I'm a control freak, which is what you have to be when you work in bomb disposal and spend your days with bullets whizzing past your head.

"I've got zero interest in killing myself, so while the challenges I've taken on as a TV presenter look super-dangerous, I was always confident that what I was doing had been thought through."

Andy, who grew up in Turiff, Aberdeenshire, has just spent the last seven months filming Beyond Bionic, a new adventure series for CBBC, where he attempts to match the skills of many of the world's strongest, fastest and most incredible animals.

The show sees dad-of-two Andy take on what he admits were some of the biggest challenges of his life as he turned to science, cutting-edge technology and ingenuity to help him conquer Mother Nature.

He travelled to Canada, America, Norway, Spain, Iceland, Italy, Austria and Japan in a bid to mimic the impressive talents of creatures including the Mako shark, peregrine falcon, gorilla, Darwin's Bark spider, hummingbird, grasshopper and Pompeii worm.

Andy, who has a degree in zoology and is a member of Mensa, said: "I came up with the idea for the show seven years ago when I started working in television.

"Animals are capable of the most incredible things and I wanted to show what a human would have to do to try to recreate those skills."

The first episode of the series was

“I wanted to show what a human would have to do to try to recreate the skills of animals

TOUGH Ex-para Andy Torbet

Jenny Morrison

broadcast on Tuesday and showed Andy off the coast of California using underwater jet packs and hoverboards to try to mimic the speed and jumping skill of one of the planet's fiercest predators, the Mako shark. He failed.

Other episodes see him taking on the climbing brilliance of a gecko by attempting to scale a 170ft, all-glass building in Boston, and trying to outrun an ostrich.

Andy, who has also worked on programmes including The One Show and Coast, said: "Not many people know about the Pompeii worm, but it lives in deep underwater volcanoes and is very heat resistant.

"I wanted to show how I could increase my heat resistance, so I started off doing some fire-walking in my bare feet, then did some fire training with the Manchester Airport Fire Service who set a mock plane on fire.

"We ended up at a furnace near Birmingham - it looked like something out of the 19th century industrial revolution - and I was standing in a 1500-degree fireball with a special breathing tank and wearing a specialist fire suit.

"When we were filming, I was totally focused on all that I had to do - although I do remember being surprised by the intense light of the fire."

For another challenge, Andy takes on the peregrine falcon, which can dive through the sky at speeds of up to 240mph.

Andy, an experienced free-fall parachutist, knew he would need help to increase the speed at which his body would fall, so he called a rocket scientist friend who designed jet rockets he attached to his thighs.

He said: "That was perhaps the most dangerous challenge as we designed the technology we needed ourselves.

"When you are actually falling at such an incredible speed, you don't really feel it - but you feel it when you start to put on the brakes.

"A beeper went off in my ear when it was time for me to start slowing down - which you

