

Star trails above the HIMALAYAS

Astrophotographer **David White** has travelled the world to take images of nature and the night sky, and now his work can be seen in a new exhibition at the Osborne Studio Gallery in London. Here he talks about his trip to the Himalayas to shoot the stars.

I was very fortunate to be invited by the World Pheasant Association to join a group trekking in Nepal for nearly a month in May this year. Our travel was sponsored by the Ultimate Travel Company, pioneers and specialists in trekking holidays.

It was a mission to find and capture images of the elusive Monal (Bird of Nine Colours), but I also wanted to photograph the stars in 'grand harmony' with the Himalayas. The drama of mountains and starry skies has always inspired me, as much as the flora and fauna of faraway places.

We started off by trekking to the Pipar Conservation Area, which is within the Annapurna Conservation Area, and a couple of days later arrived at what must be the most stunningly beautiful place to camp in the whole world, with wonderful views of Machapuchare (the Sacred Mountain) and of the Annapurnas. Here I could photograph the stars, particularly as we were there during new Moon.

The Milky Way was stunning, forming a complete arc across the sky.

One of the challenges on the trip was choosing what camera gear I should take. Not only were we going to be hiking long distances up very steep and difficult terrain, but we were also going to be at altitudes of between three thousand and nearly five thousand metres. I bought an Olympus OM-D E-M1 Mark II Mirrorless camera, with an assortment of lenses. I also took one Canon EOS-1D X DSLR camera and a couple of lenses for it.

We were fortunate with the weather because during that time of year the mists can roll up and down the valleys, covering the mountains.

However, we had wonderful views for most of the time. I decided to use the Canon 1D X with a 16–35mm, f/2.8 lens for the astrophotography. One difficulty was the very high humidity and keeping the lens clear proved to be tough, even though I used a couple of hand warmers on it. Nevertheless, I took about 200 frames and used *Starstax* to create an image.

Among the many thrilling, unforgettable aspects of our Himalayan journey was the trek to Everest National Park.

The scenery on the way to Khumjung, a region on the Nepalese side of Mount Everest, is of breathtaking beauty, with its views of mountains, rivers, valleys and, as we got higher, a profusion of scarlet rhododendrons in full bloom.

Our Sherpa guide, Tenzing Tashi, has lived in the Everest region



for all of his life. It took us two days to trek to Khumjung, where the only means of transport is man or beast. A Sherpa can carry 100 kilograms. We saw many mules, yaks and jobkyos (a cross between a cow and a yak), some going as far as Everest Base Camp. There was huge excitement when our guide Tashi spotted a fresh snow leopard print. Maybe next time!

David White is a photographer and farmer from Wiltshire.



About the exhibition

Established on Motcomb Street in Belgravia in 1986, the Osborne Studio Gallery is one of London's most respected art galleries. The David White exhibition, which is available at the Osborne Studio Gallery between 17 September to 3 October 2019, includes White's photography from locales as varied as Hokkaido in Japan, the Himalayas, Zimanga in South Africa and from his home in Wiltshire, on the edge of the Marlborough Downs. His work mostly focuses on photography of wildlife, from cheetahs and buffalos to birds of prey and, of course, the Himalayan Monal pheasant. There are also copious starscapes, taken over craggy Nepalese peaks and the South African shrub. Opening times for the exhibition are 10am–6pm weekdays, and 11am–5pm on Saturdays. For more details telephone 020 7235 9667, or visit osg.uk.com.