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FROM FARMER TO PHOTOGRAPHER



Wiltshire farmer turned photographer

This month fourth generation Wiltshire farmer turned photographer, David White, will be having a solo show of about 40 wildlife and landscape images at **The Osborne Studio Gallery in London**. We caught up with David to find out a little bit more about his dual passions of wildlife and photography.

“I have farmed all my life on the edge of the Marlborough Downs in Wiltshire. I have always loved wildlife and we do all that we can to encourage wildlife on our farm. Although we farm conventionally, we do so with a care and a passion for the wildlife we have on the farm,” said David, continuing on to explain the steps that are taken on the farm to help support and promote wildlife.

“We have a stewardship scheme and devote over 250 acres specifically for wildlife. We have about 50 acres of wild bird cover which are crops grown for farmland birds in strategic places around the farm. These provide food all winter for a wide range of species. We have one of the largest colonies of tree sparrows in the UK. Ten years ago we had one pair, now we have an overwintering flock of over four hundred. We also

I’m often asked what do I enjoy photographing most....the answer is... anything in the natural world!

feed the birds all the year using giant feeders as we believe feeding birds in the summer is very important to increase both the size and number of broods, and we normally get four broods a year.

“We also have about 20 acres of land which provides nesting habitat for ground nesting birds such as lapwings and stone curlews. These are amazing birds which come all the way from Africa. There had been no stone curlews on the Marlborough Downs for 50 years, so you can imagine our delight when a pair arrived five years ago! They have nested here ever since.

“We also have around 150 acres of grass downland, which we manage for birds of prey. We do this by grazing the grass with Highland cattle to produce the right habitat for mice and voles. As a result, we have many birds of prey on the farm, including short-eared owls which arrive in October and stay until the following April. It is a stunning sight seeing the owls hunting over the downs...and perfect for photography too! What is really exciting is by providing the right habitat the wildlife will move in.”



David explained that he is also part of a local group of farmers all supporting wildlife.

“I am very involved with The Marlborough Downs’ Space for Nature project, which is a group of about 40 farmers joining together to improve habitat on a landscape scale. We also connect with local people to come along to various events on our farms. These include dawn chorus walks, owl prowls, butterfly walks and many others.”



I love taking photos first thing in the morning, whatever time of year. You always see wildlife then and the light is at its best.

Photography has become an increasingly important part of David’s life.

“Photography and wildlife go hand in hand as far as I am concerned. When I see lovely wildlife it’s nice to try and photograph it too. I have been photographing for about 10 years but more so for the last three or four. I have taken a back seat from the farm, with my son Edward now running the business which gives me more time to do other things.

“My first camera was a Kodak box camera! And recently I have taken the big step of changing cameras from Canon to Olympus. My favourite lens is a long lens, as this helps you to get close to wildlife.”

A self taught photographer, David continued:

“I would encourage anyone who is interested in photography to get in lots of practice, keep enthusiastic, follow your passion and don’t give up.

“I am always willing to learn new things with courses if need be. For example, recently I’ve been doing some astrophotography which I love.”

“I also love skies and clouds.



“Photography is all about the light, and also stars are amazing! When you look up to see a sky full of stars... and wonder...when you take a photo of stars you will see 10 times more than you can see with your eyes! It’s the same with the Aurora Borealis (The Northern Lights).

Asked what is the one thing that he would like to photograph, David explained how he has recently returned from Nepal and would like to return to try to photograph a Snow Leopard. “They are so rare and almost impossible to find...what a challenge! That would be awesome!”

Looking forward to his first exhibition, David described how this came about.

“Last summer I met some lovely people called Peter and Sue Jenson. I had donated an auction prize of a ride in a combine harvester to

My most favourite place to photograph is probably on our farm on the Marlborough Downs! However there are very many other wonderful places... Africa is amazing.

the wonderful Greatwood charity, which Peter and Sue bought. Peter mentioned the Osbourne Gallery and arranged a meeting there a few weeks later. It will be a challenge choosing which photos to show!

The exhibition is at The Osborne Studio Gallery, 2 Motcomb Street, Belgravia, London SW1X 8JU, from September 18th to October 4th. Entry is free.

