

New Scientist

WEEKLY 30 December 2023

PREVIEW OF 2024

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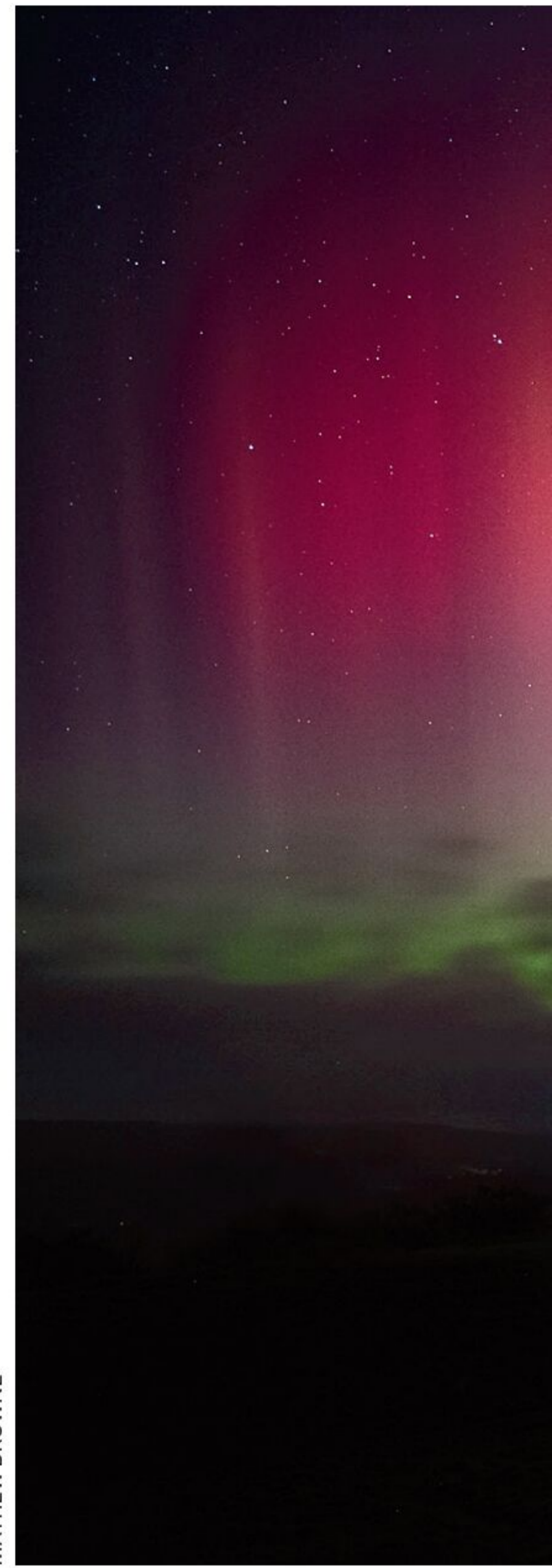
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MARC MARCO RIPOLL



MATHEW BROWNE



ALEX WIDES



Light up the sky



Capture the Atlas

THERE are few sights as spectacular as aurorae, and they are used to dazzling effect in the Northern Lights Photographer of the Year contest, run by travel photography blog Capture the Atlas.

This year, 25 breathtaking shots from around the world have made the final cut, a selection of which are shown here and on the next two pages. Each brings a special dimension to this extraordinary phenomenon, which is caused by charged particles from the sun colliding with atmospheric gases.

With the next peak of the sun's activity (known as its solar maximum) approaching in 2024, people are already catching a glimpse of aurorae – both northern and southern – in wider regions than usual. Next year's displays are set to be even more spectacular.

Many of the shots in 2023's competition were taken in locations where it is unusual to see the northern lights, such as south Wales, captured in Mathew Browne's *Goleuadau'r Gogledd* (top right). The name is a loose Welsh translation of "northern lights", and the image shows local landmark Paxton's Tower illuminated. "Witnessing the aurora borealis this far south is a rare occurrence," said Browne. "For over an hour, the horizon beyond the clouds emitted hues of green and pink. However, for a brief yet magical moment, the sky came alive with impressive pink pillars, visible to the naked eye."

Also shown are Marc Marco Ripoll's *Kirkjufell Explosion* (far left), taken near Iceland's Mount Kirkjufell; and Alex Wides's *Waning Sun*, shot on Senja Island, Norway (bottom right). ■

Gege Li

Images continue on the next page



KAT LAWMAN

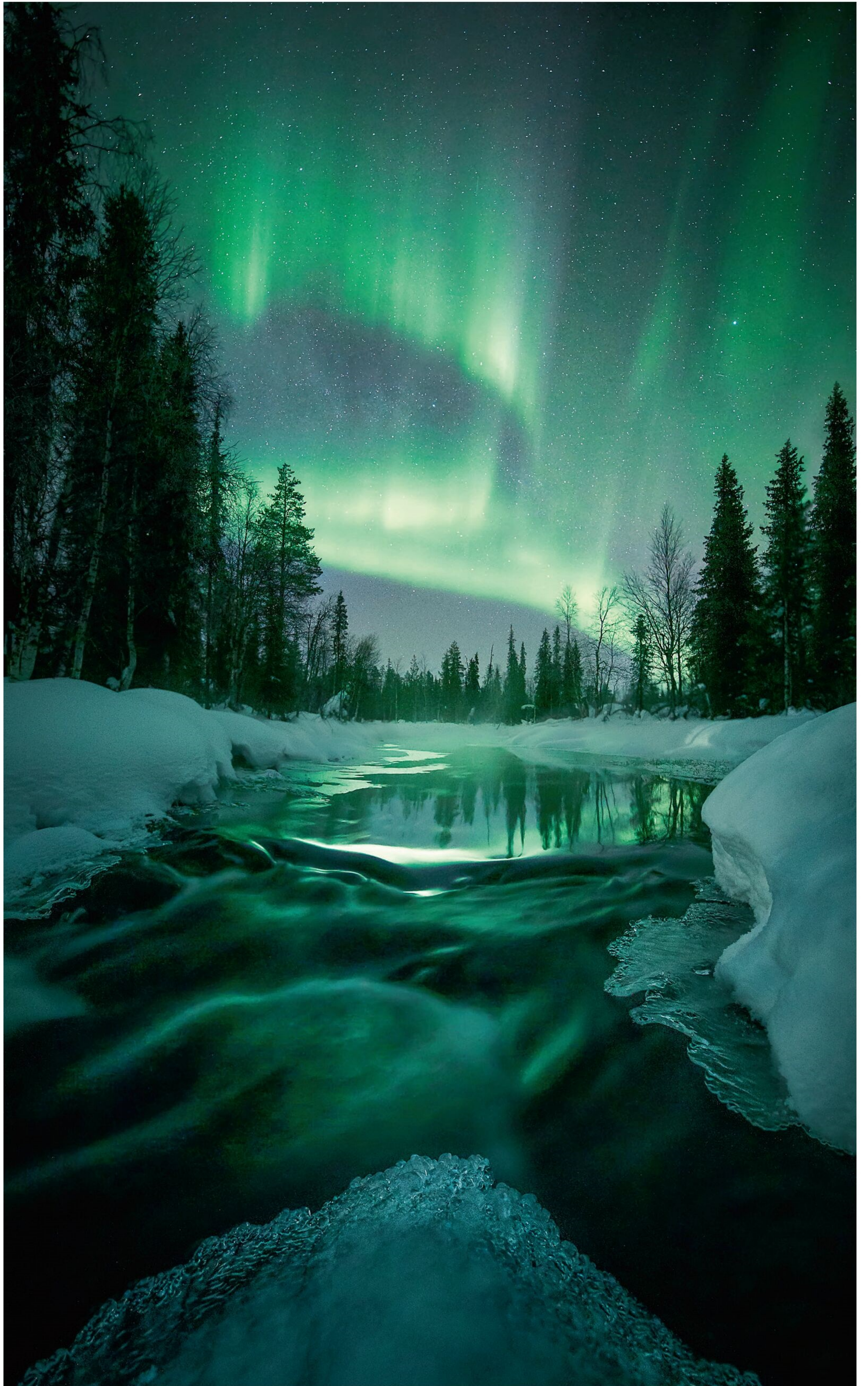


MARYBETH KICZENSKI

Clockwise from top left: *Island of Aurora* taken by Kat Lawman in northern Sweden; Frøydis Dalheim's *Circle of Life*, taken in Finland at almost -30°C ; the aurora australis, captured in *Lost Who I Want To Be* by Jordan McNally at Moke Lake, New Zealand; *Fleeting Moments on Ice*, shot from an ice cave in Alaska by MaryBeth Kiczenski



JORDAN MCNALLY



FROYDISDALHEIM