

New Scientist

WEEKLY 15 June 2024

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ancient cousin

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2024 MILKY WAY PHOTOGRAPHER OF THE YEAR/TOM RAE

2024 MILKY WAY PHOTOGRAPHER OF THE YEAR/ANDREA CURZI

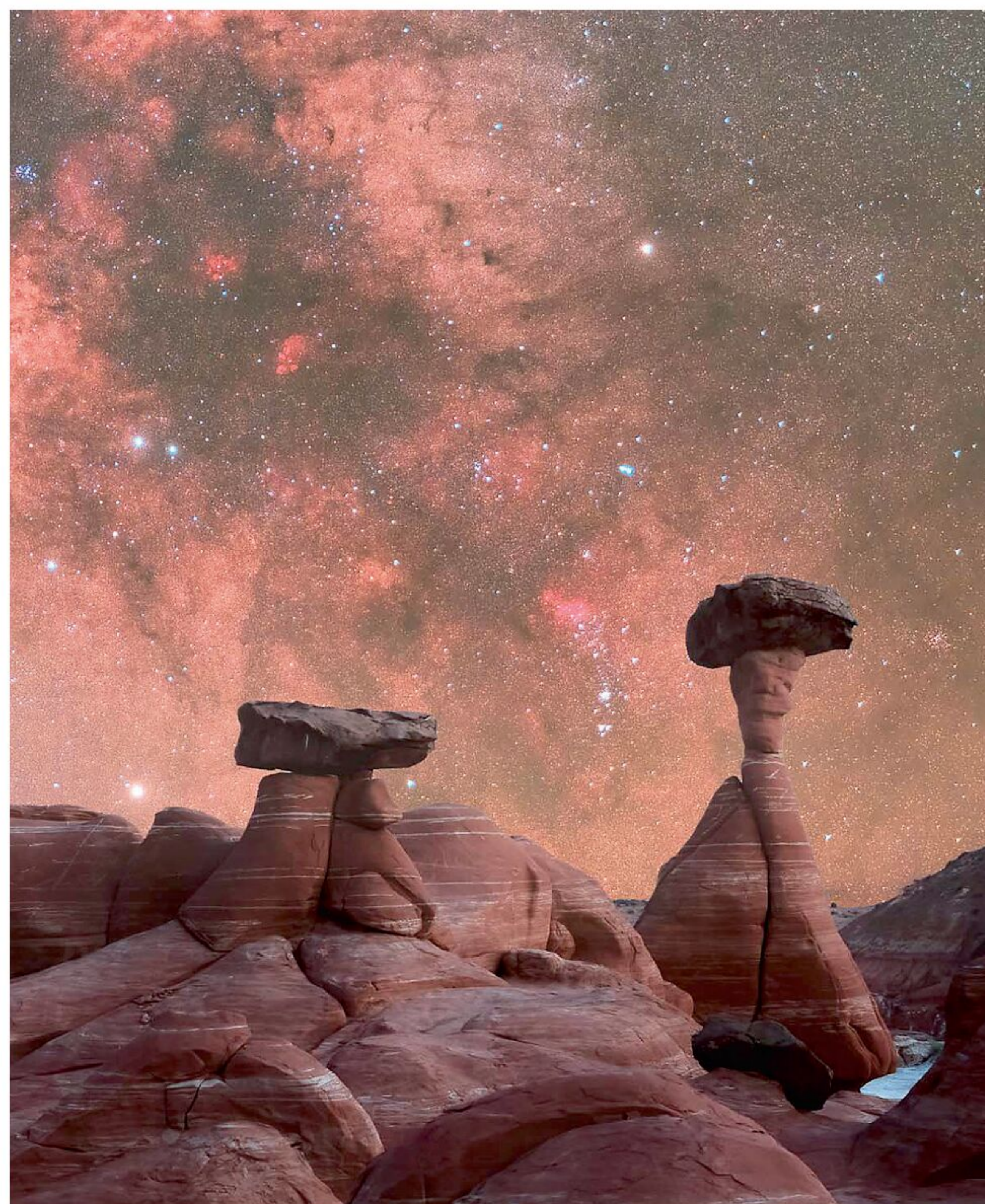


2024 MILKY WAY PHOTOGRAPHER OF THE YEAR/BRANDT RYDER





2024 MILKY WAY PHOTOGRAPHER OF THE YEAR/STEPHANIE THI



Spot the galaxy



Capture the Atlas

IN THE right place at the right time, cast your eyes to the sky and you may see something awe-inspiring.

This is the feeling evoked by these images, a few of the winners of this year's Milky Way Photographer of the Year competition. Each year, the top 25 spellbinding shots of our galaxy, captured from prime spots around the world, are curated and published by Dan Zafra, editor of travel photography blog Capture the Atlas.

Tom Rae's entry, at far left, shows the Milky Way emerging from New Zealand's highest mountain, Aoraki/Mount Cook, on a winter's night. "In rare alpine weather conditions, I embarked on a journey up the glacial valley one night," said Rae in an announcement on Zafra's site. "Upon reaching the lake, the scene that unfolded made me feel like I had landed on another planet."

In another elevated endeavour, Matej Mlakar captured an "arch" of the Milky Way (top right) over Vršič Pass – the highest mountain pass in Slovenia. The red blurs in the sky are clouds of glowing hydrogen called emission nebulae, which appear red due to emitting only at particular wavelengths. The light is produced due to the ionisation of atoms in the gas, caused by newly forming stars.

Meanwhile, the smaller images show remarkable scenes from the US. Brandt Ryder's shot, farthest left of the two, was taken in the Eastern Sierra region of California, where the Milky Way frames a violet sea of lupines. Stephanie Thi named her image, taken in Utah, *Starry Hoodoo Wonderland* – a nod to the toadstool-like hoodoo rocks that add to the aura of her starry backdrop. ■

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