

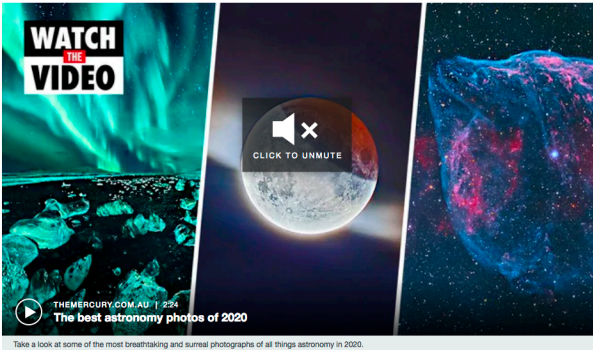
LIFESTYLE

# Snapper's 'freezing' night ends with a winner shot

How a mad midnight dash to the beach ended in national recognition for a self-professed Tassie photography "geek". WIN a Bureau of Meteorology weather calendar here >>

Jack Evans, Mercury

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Take a look at some of the most breathtaking and surreal photographs of all things astronomy in 2020.

Experienced former army helicopter pilot, Boeing 747-400 jumbo jet captain and more recently a Central Highlands councillor, Robert Cassidy knows weather better than most.

It is that knowledge and observational skill that put Mr Cassidy in the right place at the right time earlier this year.

"I spent 36 years as a pilot so I had to study weather – and experience it," he said.

"I can't get it out of my system. I need to know what the weather is going to be, every day."

His passions – like all good things – come in threes; flying, weather and photography.

"I love photography. I guess you'd call me somewhat of a geek, I'm fascinated by the science of photography," Mr Cassidy said.

"I try to push my limits, I'm always trying something new, something different."

That is how he found himself at Cassidys Bay (no relation) early one freezing October morning.

"I was closing the curtains before bed and I looked outside and thought "that's strange, I don't remember seeing any clouds." He said.



Robert Cassidy from Bothwell taken in Lijiang, Yunnan Province, China.

"I stuck my head further out the window and thought, "holy smokes it looks like an aurora," he said.

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Mr Cassidy Robert grabbed his camera and made a mad dash to Goat Bluff, a popular lookout on the South Arm Peninsula, from his home in Bothwell.

However, to little avail.

"I finally gave up about 1 o'clock in the morning and as I was heading back home, I looked in my rear-view mirror and all of a sudden I saw a brilliant greenish bloom," he said.

"I happened to be right there by Cassidys Bay (near Old Beach) so I pulled over, grabbed my camera and kept on shooting.

"I don't think I got home until about 4:30 in the morning."

Mr Cassidy said he is familiar with the transpolar phenomenon – aurora borealis or 'northern lights' – through his time flying in the northern hemisphere, but this was his first time catching the aurora australis.

"They're all so beautiful curving and swerving, but what I'm most interested in is capturing the different colours," he said.



Robert Cassidy's photo of the aurora australis over Hobart and Kunanyi/ Mt Wellington has been selected in the Bureau of Meteorology's annual calendar. Picture: Robert Cassidy

"I'm definitely interested in exploring that more and there's a real science to it, how different gases in the atmosphere glow a certain colour.

"For me, it's a love for the science as much as the art."

The product was enough to capture the eye of the nation's weather authority – the Bureau of Meteorology.

So much so that one of Mr Cassidy's pictures of the aurora australis will feature in the Bureau's 2021 annual weather calendar.

But that's not all.

"I never expected this one photo would generate the interest it has," he said.

"The day I had it printed at the old Perfect Prints shop on Collins Street, an old woman who I never met before, from Battery Point, bought a copy immediately."

As for tips to budding photographers, he said to let luck play its part.



Mr Cassidy, always at the ready with his camera, captured Bothwell blanketed in snow during August's major snow event. Picture: ROBERT CASSIDY

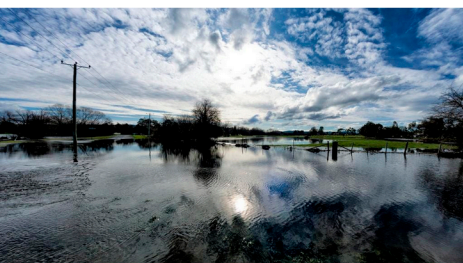
"Aside from skill, a photographer must have a fair bit of luck," Mr Cassidy said.

"A first prize winner by one set of Judges on a particular day may not even get a sniff, by a different set of Judges on a different day."

The BOM states the elusive green light display, sometimes referred to as 'southern lights', is a space weather phenomenon and a common sight in Antarctica, sometimes visible from southern parts of Australia.

Auroras are the result of events that start on the Sun.

High-energy plasma from the sun (a gas of electrically charged particles) can escape from its gravitational field – known as solar wind.



Mr Cassidy shared this photo of Bothwell in flood at Andrews Bridge with The Mercury. Picture: Robert Cassidy

As this sweeps over Earth's magnetic field, it energises charged particles stored in the comet-like tail of the field.

These particles accelerate towards the Earth, spiralling down the magnetic field lines towards the Polar Regions.

Upon entering the atmosphere, they collide with atoms triggering light emissions and creating the beautiful colours captured by Mr Cassidy.

## WHO DOESN'T LOVE A GOOD WEATHER PHOTO?

The Mercury has limited early-release copies of the [Bureau of Meteorology's 2021 Australian Weather Calendar](#), filled with the best weather photos from around the country, to give away.

To win a calendar, let us know your favourite Tasmanian season and why in the comments below.

Winners will be selected and contacted in the coming weeks.

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