

3

Take an astro snap

Award-winning astrophotographer Josh Dury gives his top tips on taking the perfect night sky photo.



DID YOU KNOW?

The Moon does not shine with its own light. Moonlight is just reflected sunlight.

What you need

- An adult
- Clear skies
- Somewhere dark
- Warm clothes
- Smartphone or DSLR camera
- Snacks

Josh Dury's top astrophotography tips



International Dark Sky Week (21–28 April) takes place this month. This is a great chance to discover the night skies.

According to award-winning astrophotographer Josh Dury, the top three April highlights are the constellation (star pattern) of Leo (the lion), the Lyrid meteor shower and the solar system's planets. To find Leo, search for a backwards question mark shape in the southern sky. Look out for shooting stars as the Lyrid meteor shower reaches its peak on 22 April, and on 25 April three planets – Mercury, Saturn and Venus – will be visible with the crescent Moon.

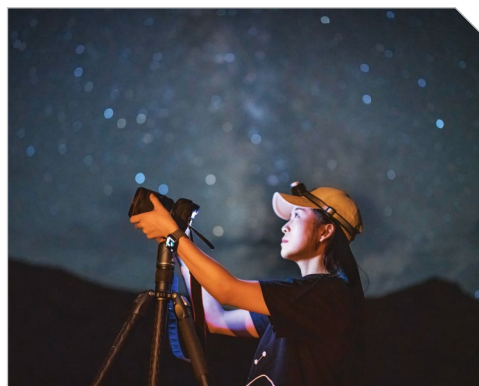
STAY WARM

Dury says, "Always take some hot drinks and snacks with you and wrap up warm, especially if a frost is predicted. It may be cold, but the air will be clean and will provide a greater view of the universe."

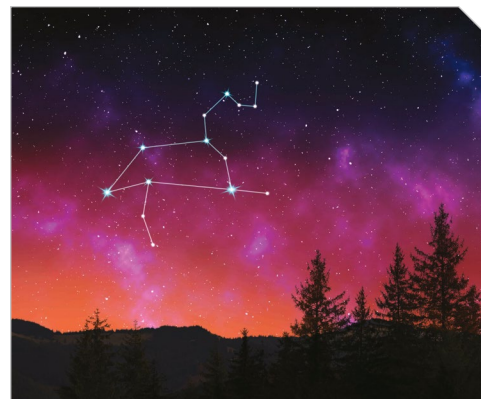
Dury – who is also known as "Starman" – told *Science+Nature* that he has loved gazing into space since he was seven years old, having always been curious about life on other worlds. His amazing photo of the Milky Way over Easter Island is our pull-out poster on page 25.



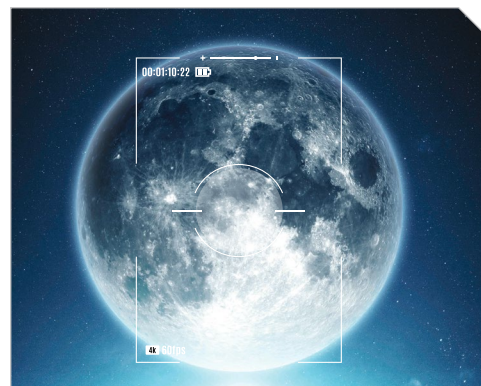
1 Before you go out to photograph the skies, check the weather – you need a clear night. Bright moonlight makes it harder to spot fainter stars. Any time around the new Moon will be darker.



3 Set up your camera. Smartphones with a good camera are ok, but a DSLR is better. The most important thing is to make sure your camera is supported using a tripod or smartphone holder.



2 Choose your subject. Leo, Ursa Major and Virgo are April constellations and Orion is still visible. You can also spot the planets Mercury, Jupiter, Saturn and Venus, or focus on the Moon.



4 Set your camera to infinity focus. This lets you capture images of fainter stars. Longer shutter speeds allow the camera to collect more light, but more than 8–10 seconds can make photos blurry.