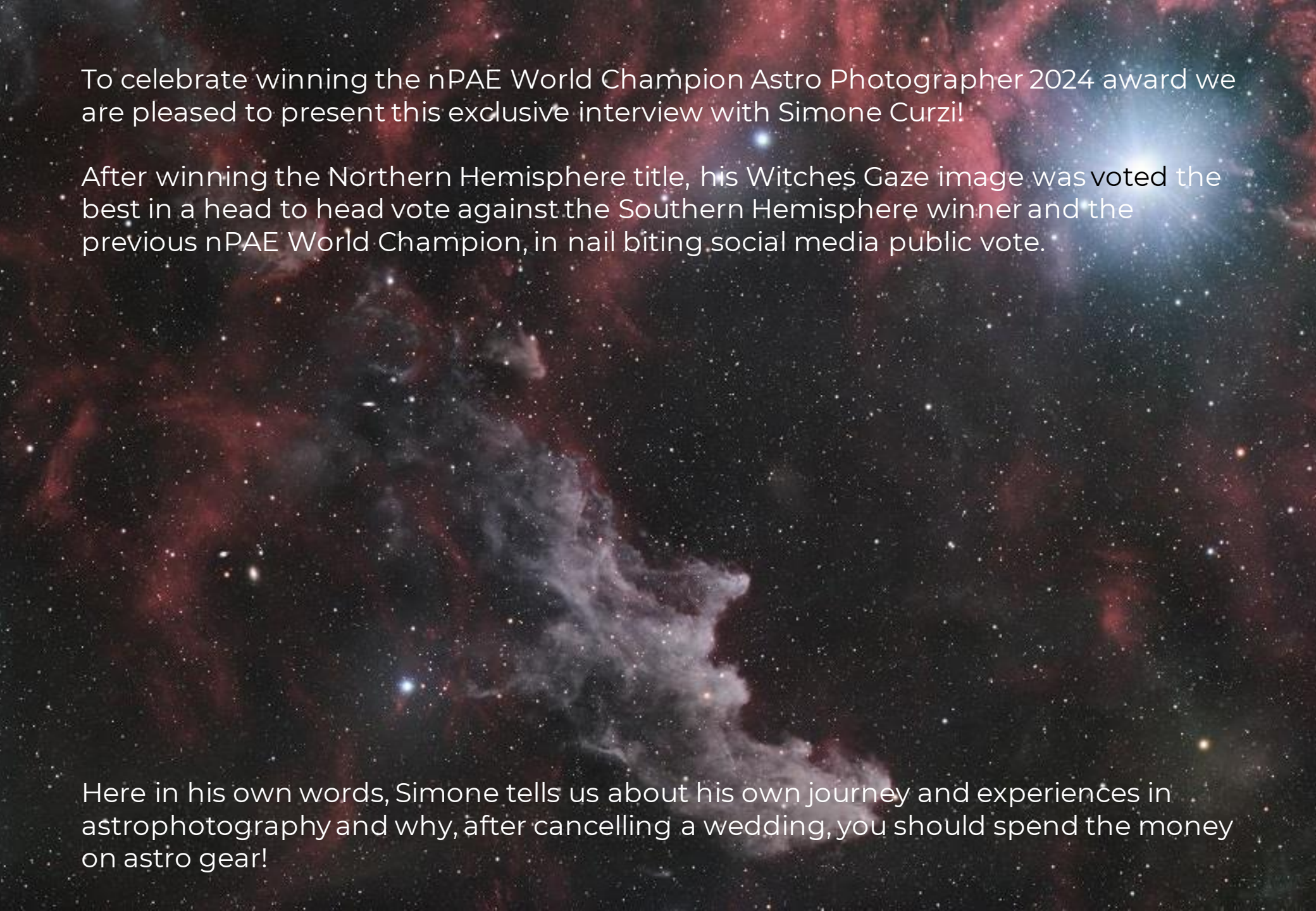


Interview with Simone Curzi  
nPAE World Champion Astro Photographer 2024



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PRECISION ASTRO ENGINEERING



To celebrate winning the nPAE World Champion Astro Photographer 2024 award we are pleased to present this exclusive interview with Simone Curzil!

After winning the Northern Hemisphere title, his Witches Gaze image was voted the best in a head to head vote against the Southern Hemisphere winner and the previous nPAE World Champion, in nail biting social media public vote.

Here in his own words, Simone tells us about his own journey and experiences in astrophotography and why, after cancelling a wedding, you should spend the money on astro gear!

**nPAE** – Hi Simone, thanks so much for taking part in this interview!

**Simone** – Hello everyone my name is Simone Curzi, and thank you for this wonderful opportunity to share my story.

**nPAE** – When did you start photographing the night sky?

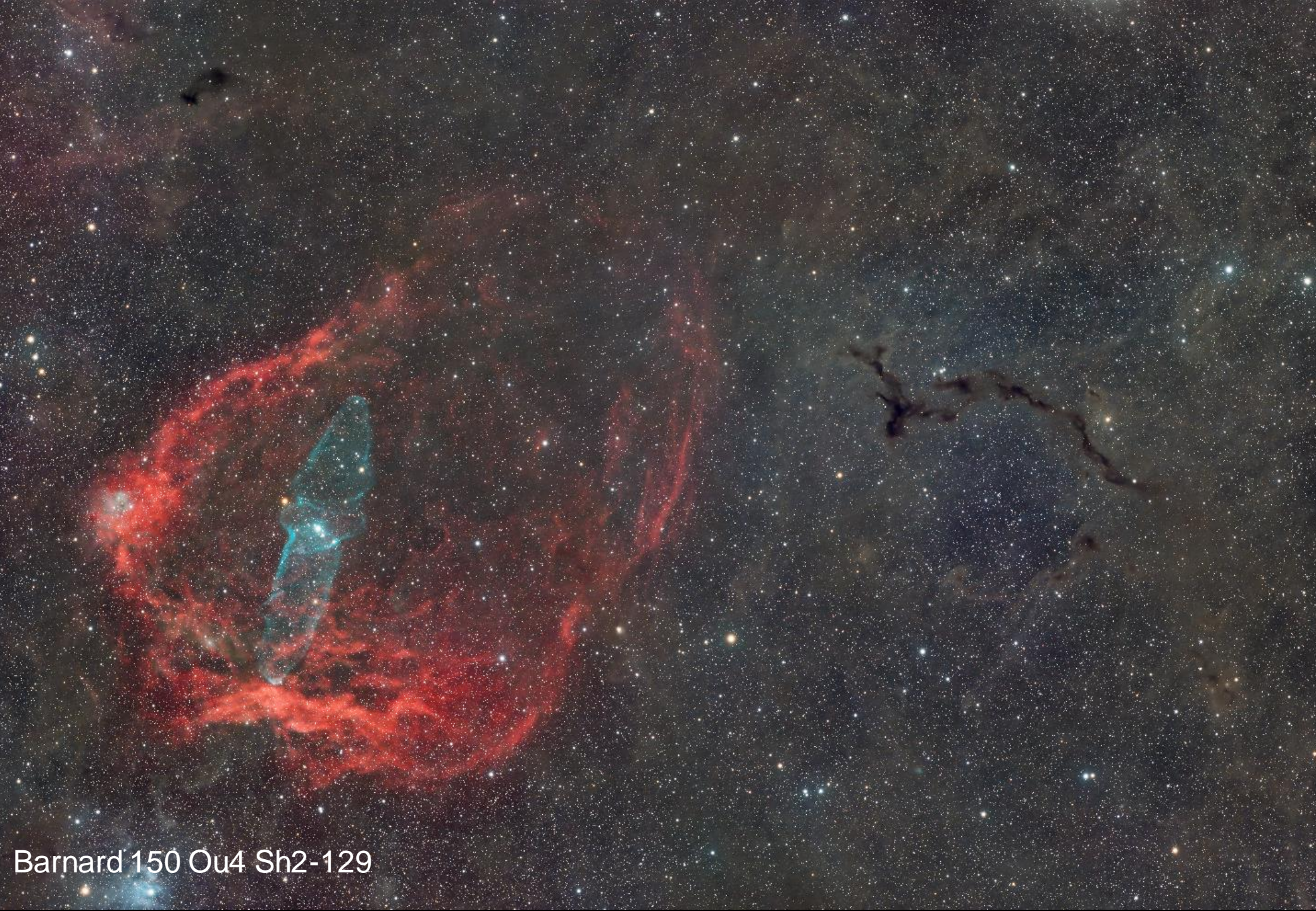
**Simone** – I started photographing the night sky relatively recently, about four years ago. At the time, I was planning my wedding, but in the end, things didn't work out, and everything was called off. I had managed to save quite a bit of money, so I decided to invest part of it in something I had been dreaming about for a long time: my first telescope.

In the early months, while I was trying to learn and find my way by browsing the internet, I discovered that I could connect a DSLR camera to the telescope... and it was love at first sight. That's how this beautiful journey into the deep sky began, and it still fascinates me more and more every day.

**nPAE** – What is your favourite astronomical object and why?

**Simone** – When I first started, I was deeply fascinated by the Horsehead Nebula, I really wanted to capture it. Today, with a more refined and conscious sense of taste, I've fallen in love with wide-field views and the ability to include multiple objects within the same frame.





Barnard 150 Ou4 Sh2-129



**nPAE** – Where do you like to observe / photograph the most, what is good about this place?

**Simone** - Answering this question is very easy: thanks to the Forca Canapine Amateur Astronomy Association, which I'm proud to be part of, I had the chance to discover Colle Le Cese, a beautiful corner of paradise located within the Sibillini Mountains National Park in my Region: Le Marche. It's one of the darkest and clearest skies in all of Italy.

The beauty and peace of this place are a perfect way for me to recharge and escape the many pressures of everyday life. Whenever I can, I head there with my telescope, my family, and friends.

**nPAE** – With what equipment do you photograph?

**Simone** – Let's hope my partner doesn't read this part! Like many enthusiasts, I quickly ended up accumulating more than a few "toys", different focal lengths, various cameras... but what I truly love are wide-field setups.

My go-to configuration is my trusty RedCat 51 paired with the ZWO ASI 6200MM, mounted on the well-tested EQ6. It's a relatively lightweight and convenient setup, which allows me to happily head out in search of the darkest skies.





**nPAE** – Talk us through some of your favourite images.

**Simone** – To be honest: I'm deeply attached to all of my recent images. Over the past two years, my approach to astrophotography has changed significantly. These days, I focus on just a few projects, but each one involves a long and thoughtful planning phase. I start preparing months in advance, long before the target region of the sky is high enough. I study the objects I want to capture, look at the work of other photographers I admire, estimate how many hours or nights of integration I'll need, choose the best framing, and envision the style of post-processing I want to apply.

When an image is born and developed through this kind of process, it's only natural to feel deeply connected to it.

If I had to choose just one image, it would undoubtedly be "The Witch's Gaze", which you awarded last year. It was the first image I created fully embracing this philosophy, and it brought me great satisfaction, from winning your competition to being featured as a NASA APOD. It also portrays an object I find incredibly fascinating and mysterious, unlike anything else in the sky.



Nightsky of Colle le Cese

**nPAE** – Amazing! Tell us a little more about your life and journey as an astrophotographer.

**Simone** – My journey as an astrophotographer began almost by chance, during a particularly delicate moment in my life.

I felt the need to shift perspective, to search for a new horizon, and I found it simply by looking up at the sky. Since then, astrophotography has become far more than just a passion: it's a way to find balance, to clear my mind, and to rediscover silence and wonder in a world that often moves too fast.

By day, I work in a bank, but every spare moment is dedicated to the night sky. I'm also a father and a partner, and I always try to share this passion with the people I love, because for me, astrophotography isn't just about technique. It's about emotion, storytelling, and connection.

I've been fortunate to receive several awards, but what truly matters to me is staying inspired, continuing to grow day by day, and nurturing a passion that helps me reconnect with myself. Being part of the Forca Canapine Amateur Astronomy Association and the ShaRA project (Shared Remote Astrophotography) has played a key role in my development, thanks to the constant exchange with extraordinary friends and colleagues.

I always strive to raise the bar, as I'm a very competitive and demanding person, especially with myself.

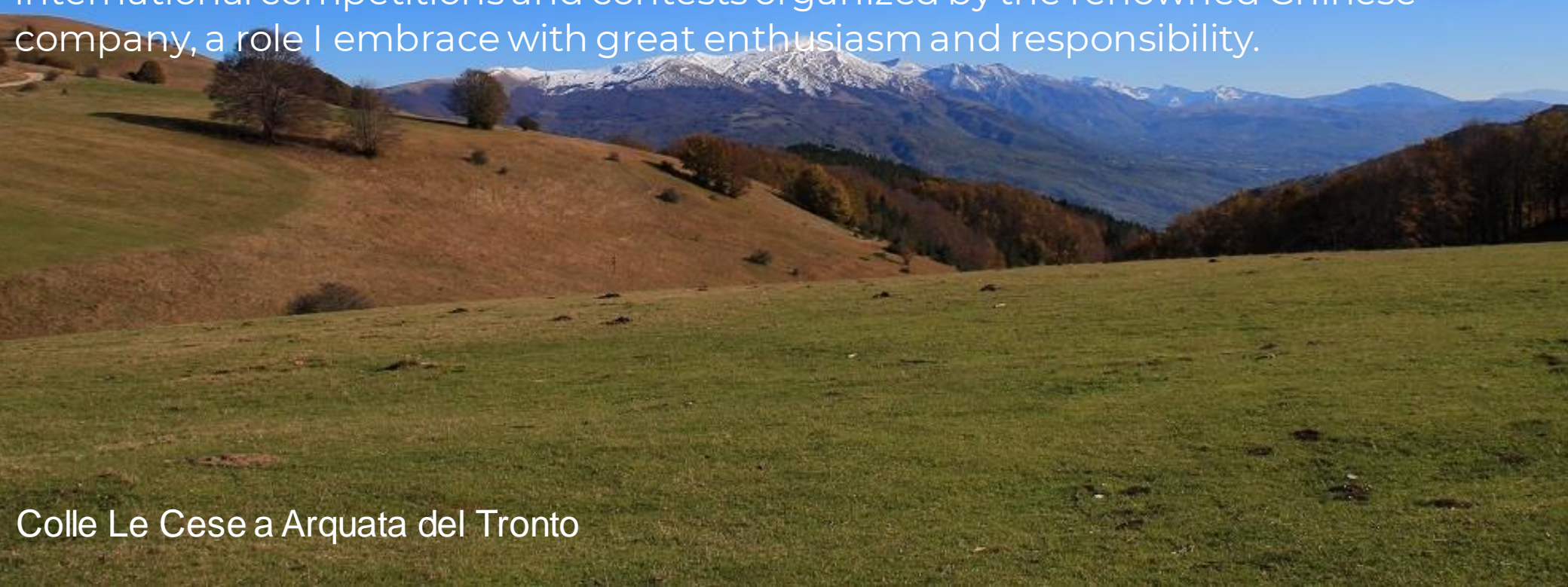
And yet, astrophotography, almost magically, manages to satisfy both sides of me: the perfectionist who seeks excellence, and the dreamer who simply needs to unplug and breathe. Even though it came into my life a bit later, I can truly say I've found something I hope to carry with me forever.



Precisely because astrophotography has given me so much, I feel a strong desire to give something back.

For just over a year now, in collaboration with my association, I've been organizing outreach events, image processing courses, and the Sibillini Astro Festival, one of the most important astronomy-themed events in central Italy. The festival blends our passion for the night sky with the themes of nature conservation and dark sky protection, and aims to support the recovery of the Arquata del Tronto area, which was heavily affected by the 2016 earthquake.

In addition, since early 2025, I've been collaborating with ZWO ASI as a judge for international competitions and contests organized by the renowned Chinese company, a role I embrace with great enthusiasm and responsibility.



Colle Le Cese a Arquata del Tronto



**nPAE** – What advice do you have for aspiring astrophotographers?

**Simone** – Even at the risk of sounding a bit obvious, the first piece of advice I would give is to reach out to an astronomy association. Many people enter the world of astrophotography without any practical knowledge, often spending a lot of money with little to show for it, leading to frustration and the temptation to give up at the first difficulties. An association can truly make a difference: it helps you take your first steps, guides you through equipment and techniques, and helps you avoid unnecessary expenses and disappointment.

Another piece of advice I'd offer, also to myself, and to those who are no longer beginners, is to learn to take ourselves a little less seriously. Let's try to reconnect with those emotions, dreams, and fantasies that first drew us to this wonderful world.

Astrophotography can easily become a life defining passion, but sometimes it risks turning into a constant arena for comparison, if not outright conflict. Let's always remember the sense of wonder beneath a starry sky, the joy of capturing our first nebula. Let's nurture that feeling, while respecting everyone's passion and work, free from envy, jealousy, or division.

**nPAE** – What's it like being world champion?

**Simone** – I've never hidden it: I'm ambitious and competitive, so winning was absolutely amazing, an incredible thrill! It's such a great feeling to have the opportunity to share my story and to be included in the hall of fame alongside some truly great names.

Without meaning to diminish anyone or overly praise others, if you look at the past editions, you'll notice that some of the winners really stand out in this field, they know what they're doing and they leave a mark.

I hope to follow in their footsteps, to keep improving, and to contribute through my work to raising awareness about the importance of preserving the night sky, a heritage that belongs to everyone, not just us enthusiasts.

Thanks again for this wonderful opportunity, please following on my astrobin and instagram for more pics!

<https://app.astrobin.com/u/MRWSKYLOVER>

[https://www.instagram.com/simone\\_curzi\\_skylover/](https://www.instagram.com/simone_curzi_skylover/)

Clear skies to all!



Associazione Astrofili Forca Canapine





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