

Lost Worlds is a portfolio of predominantly landscape photographs from voyages to the polar regions since 2013.

These journeys have taken in the Antarctic Peninsula, South Georgia and the Falklands in the Southern Hemisphere; and Svalbard, Chukotka, Wrangel Island, Baffin Island and Greenland in the Arctic. Many have been on expedition with Mark, and I am eternally grateful for the unforgettable experiences they have brought. So different to the places where most humans live most of the time, a journey to the polar regions is like visiting another world.

The polar landscape is not an obvious home for humans, although people have made a living in the Arctic for thousands of years. It is Earth's final frontier, mostly treeless, with comfort hard won, and sustenance hunted and struggled for. Yet the elements of the landscape and the animals that live in these latitudes present a face of the planet that is unrivalled in its majesty and wonder.

For the photographer the practicalities of finding balanced compositions and crafting them well, with good technique, is a preoccupation. There are a host of practical difficulties including: moving ship; bobbing zodiac; splashing waves; bitter winds; elusive lighting; dangerous and/or fast-moving animals; and, sometimes other passengers in the composition! For a landscape specialist used to Scottish mountains and English woodlands these have been significant challenges.

With luck a precious few images may distill an intangible quality of mystery, light, form, reality, tension and beauty to be worth more prolonged consideration. The unifying quality of the polar world that appeals to my imagination especially is that it remains truly wild, and far beyond the trivia of our daily existence. After a couple of weeks onboard ship the realisation sometimes dawns that this wild world continuing almost unseen, season after season, year after year over aeons, is actually the Real World.

The colour of light itself, warm or cool, depending on weather and time of day, always influences the reflective surfaces of ice and snow. Even at the end of summer, sea ice still drifts in the Arctic, a hunting ground for polar bears and a haul-out rest-stop for walrus families. Around Greenland in the north and the entire Antarctic continent in the south, are giant icebergs, natural masterpieces borne from glaciers and ice sheets, sculpted by wave action and the passage of time. Many polar landscapes are spectacularly mountainous,

presenting raw cliffs that rise straight from the ocean, sometimes to summits measured in thousands of metres.

And then there are the animals, incredibly adapted to their refrigerated home over millions of years. In the sea great whale numbers are rising after the end of commercial whaling in 1985. There may be no more spectacular performance in nature than a breaching humpback whale, but what an elusive moment! Photographers who have made successful breaching images have my respect and admiration. Like a late-arriving bird-spotter I have been counting the whale species we have seen on journeys with Mark, including sperm whale, Gray, humpback, bowhead, minke, fin, sei, narwhal, beluga, orca...a short list indeed, but still I count myself lucky to have seen any one of them.

In the Arctic, polar bears command the landscape whether on sea ice or land, and their territorial companions – walrus, many seal varieties, musk oxen, wolf, Arctic fox – must keep their distance; as must we, on landings. It is no surprise that a primary task on board ship in the long hours of daylight is looking for *Ursus Maritimus* (the sea bear).

In the Antarctic, where landings are more relaxed in the absence of polar bears there are equally charismatic creatures to observe and wonder at, with penguins of many kinds dominating through sheer numbers. Giant elephant seals hold their shoreline territories aggressively, and leopard seals, Weddell seals and fur seals can be seen resting on beaches and ice floes, and in the water hunting.

At both poles the bird life also astonishes in its variety, resilience and adaptation. Many have the most enormous migration ranges, and somehow carve a living in impossible situations and against intolerable odds, these being intensified by climate change. As a landscape photographer I find their rapidity of movement far too elusive for my particular photographic adaptation. Penguins represent the aspirational limit of my bird photography.

As wild and exceptional as it remains, the polar world is not 'timeless' in its present state. We enter a critical period in history with rapid climate change showing signs of running out of control. Sea ice is in danger of disappearing from the Arctic in summer, and the seemingly-immutable ice sheets that defend the coastlines of Antarctica and parts of Greenland may be approaching irreversible collapse. The polar world's defensive shield is fading. Melting permafrost, retreating glaciers, rising snow-lines and vanishing sea ice brings the threat of mineral and resource exploration and exploitation.

The disturbance, disruption, accompanying noise, atmospheric and oceanic pollution will potentially drive many polar species to extinction.

The scientific evidence of this rapid change has been building for decades and is beyond reasonable doubt. Every polar photographer should know they are an eye witness to land, sea and wildlife that within a few decades may have changed forever. It is an extraordinary – and poignant – privilege to see and record ecosystems whose fragile beauty is now so close to the edge.

In that spirit, this print series is a tribute to the wonders of that which remains. The work is a way, for me, of holding these places close to my heart. It falls to us in the Here, and Now, to preserve these fabulous and unique landscapes, to care enough to help steer the change needed, so that these Lost Worlds will remain for future generations to discover too. My profound hope is that this portfolio will not become just an elegy.