



# North Central Camera Club Council

N4C March 2025 News Bulletin

Volume 61 No. 72 [www.n4c.us](http://www.n4c.us)



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page 1-2	President's Message
Page 2-3	Meet the N4C Board
Page 4-5	Spring Break N4C Entry Informaton
Page 5-9	N4C February Contest Results
Page 9-28	N4C February Winners
Page 28-37	Educational Article & links

The quality of photography in our competitions continues to be outstanding! As we move forward, it's crucial to uphold our submission and judging rules. I encourage all judging clubs to review both the competition and awards guidelines before evaluating the remaining contests this year. Fairness and consistency are key.

Constructive, kind feedback is always welcome. However, personal dislikes of a subject are not helpful and can be discouraging to photographers. Please be considerate – supporting and encouraging one another is essential, especially for new participants.

On a personal note, my photography these days is focused on supporting several non-profits through social media content. I won't bore you with my snapshots, but I'm enjoying the work!

Our most recent Zoom meeting was in February. While I know Sunday evenings don't work for everyone, a recent poll on alternative dates received no responses, so we'll continue with the Sunday format. The next Zoom meeting is scheduled for **March 16th at 6 PM**, with a goal of keeping it to about an hour.

Spring is right around the corner.....

Jennifer

**Jennifer L Tigges, President N4C 2024-2025**

563-590-9868 call or text

563-583-7128 voice only

*Dubuque Camera Club*



## Bulletin Editor

1<sup>st</sup> Place Digital Images are still included in the N4C Bulletins. The N4C website <http://www.n4c.us> presents all the monthly Digital winners on page 1.

"Since prints are not shown on the website, I will present all the Print winners in each issue of the N4C Bulletin," commented N4C Bulletin Editor Carl Hardy

*Where Names Become Faces and Faces Become Friends!*

**SPRING BREAK INFORMATION IS ON PAGE 4. SCAN THE BAR CODE FOR MORE INFORMATION.**

**LINKS ARE AT THE END OF THIS BULLETIN FOR EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS FROM N4C CLUBS WEBSITES. AND AND EDUCATIONAL ARTICLES.**

**\*\*Bulletin Editor's Note: The Sioux City Camera Club hosted the 2024 N4C Convention in October 2024. As of this date no N4C Club has stepped up to host the 2025 N4C Convention. I challenge an N4C Club to come forward. Hosting a N4C Annual Convention is an rewarding experience for any N4C Club.** *Where Names Become Faces and Faces Become Friends!*

Carl Hardy, N4C Bulletin Editor



## Meet the N4C Board

**Drago Nemec Director 2**

Born in Gorazde, Bosnia and Hecegovine. Come in US 1996. Retired now for one year. I was working like electronic tech with specialty on scales, metal detectors and computer systems.

Back in Bosnia my hobby was playing sax and fishing. Also I write stories for few fishing magazines. After I come to US, I become guy who send fishing stories to magazines in ex Yugoslavia.

At that time I'm forced to buy camera. I love computers and I play with graphic programs since DOS. I work on Photoshop since version 4.

After time I start taking more photos then go fishing. I love portrait photography, work on weddings and birthdays events.

Today I own two boats and six Fuji cameras. I compete in all categories, print and digital at N4C. Member of Photoshooters club in Pelican Rapids MN. When needed I take photos for local newspaper. I have facebook photography page at [drago56572@gmail.com](mailto:drago56572@gmail.com)> wrote:



Drago Nemec's Photography (Look at that FISH).





(Spring Break  
information)



Our all-day IN PERSON speaker is **Tony Sweet**, a Nikon Legend Behind the Lens. His presentations are about an hour in length and questions are encouraged during and after each presentation. Tony's photography is published worldwide in every medium and is represented by Getty Images.

# Spring Break 2025 with Tony Sweet

## Registration Form

**Saturday, April 5th, 2025**

**Mounds View High School**

**1900 Lake Valentine Road, Arden Hills, MN 55112**

### Where

Mounds View High  
School  
1900 Lake Valentine  
Road  
Arden Hills, MN 55112

Latest program information can be found on  
the *TCACCC* website: <http://www.CameraCouncil.org/>

**Register for Saturday, April 5th, 2025: Includes a Complete Day of Tony Sweet Photo Programs, Coffee Breaks, Box Lunch, Photo Vendors, the Raptor Center and Portrait Photography, plus the Interclub Show and Awards.**

**BOX LUNCHES:** Your choice of Turkey & Cheddar, Ham & Cheddar, Vegi Sandwich, or Gluten Free Greek Salad with Chicken.

**1. Registration fee is: \$50**

**2. Student Registration fee is: \$25**

**Payment options:**

**1. Paypal:** You can pay with your PayPal account, or you can pay with a credit or debit card through Paypal. You DO NOT need a PayPal account to pay with a credit or debit card through PayPal.

**There Will Be No Registration At the Door.**

**PLEASE ARRIVE EARLY:** Check-in at the registration desk.

Registration starts at 7:30 am, Opening Announcements start at 8:30 am, and the First Program will begin at 9:00 am.

**BRING YOUR CAMERA:** Over lunch hour, the Raptor Center will have birds available to photograph, and the National Camera Exchange Portrait Studio will be open.

**ENTRY:** Please enter the building through the Main Front Doors. The registration tables will be directly inside the door.

**PARKING:** Please park in the Main Parking Lot, by the doors where you enter the building.

This is the list of N4C Judging Clubs for **March**.

N4C Digital (& Print) Contacts,

If I should contact someone different, please let me know.

**IF YOUR CLUB ENTERS PRINTS, SEE BELOW FOR WHERE TO SEND ENTRIES.**

FOR DIGITAL ENTRIES, they must be received by 5:00 pm March 15, however make every effort to send them by the 13th to allow time for confirmation.

- Judging may begin on the 16th - make sure you receive confirmation that entries were received.

The cutoff time will be 5:00pm on the 15th giving the judging chair time to organize them for judging starting on the 16th. The point is....don't wait until the last minute. There have been problems with occasionally missing entries when they are not received until late in the night on the 15th.

The 2023-2024 rules are on the N4C web at <http://n4c.us/competition.htm> by clicking the blue "N4C Contest Rules" button. Copy attached. Refer to those until the new N4C Handbook is available.



The the N4C Directory is available by email from Carl Hardy and his email is [torchenterprises72@gmail.com](mailto:torchenterprises72@gmail.com) The Handbook contains the contest rules and other general N4C Info. The Directory contains the list of judging clubs for all the contests along with contact info for all the affiliated clubs. The Handbook is available for download from the web <http://n4c.us/Supplies-Forms.htm> page.

There are six Digital Image Contests each month - (see the definitions of each category in the Rules):

- Altered Reality (DA)
- Black & White (DB)
- Journalism (DJ)
- Nature (DN)
- Pictorial (DP)
- Travel (DT)

Maximum of 8 entries per club per contest, not more than one from a member in each contest

**Do not enter versions of the same image in multiple contests.** For example, do not enter both a color and B&W version in the same month. Likewise don't enter both Digital & print versions. If both win, one will be withdrawn. The rule is: "Any entry which receives a 1st, 2nd, 3rd, or HM award in a monthly competition may not be re-entered in the same year or later years, in the same or any other category, regardless of variations or changes made."

Please check your entries before sending them on for judging. Look for three things:

1. File size 750KB max. (A requirement this year)
2. **Longest side 1,920 pixels max.**
3. File name should look like this example: 01,DE028,DP,Beautiful Sunset.jpg

Content of the Email Message when you send the entries:

- a. Subject Line of the Email should say "N4C Contest Entries from \_(your)\_ Camera Club".
- b. Specify which monthly contest and how many images are attached to the Email.
- c. List the Member Numbers and corresponding member names to ensure that the Judging Club has that information.
- d. Give the Club Name and your full name.
- e. Attach the image files

**ASK THE JUDGING CLUB IF YOU DO NOT GET A RECEIVED CONFIRMATION BACK FROM THEM**

Please send me updated member lists when you have added Member Numbers. I'm glad to see new members participating in N4C contests. Naturally I need to get them registered so they are properly identified for the judging clubs. For new members, that really should be done a month in advance of entering.

(Entries must be received by 5:00 pm March 15, however **make every effort to send them by the 13th to allow time for confirmation.**

- Judging may begin on the 16th - make sure you receive confirmation that entries

were received)

If you have any trouble reaching these judging clubs, let Ken Johnson know as soon as possible.

**March Digital Image Judging Clubs:**

**ALTERED REALITY** Digital "DA" (Digital Altered Reality) is the contest ID that goes after the Member Number

Topeka Camera Club

Greg Hoglund

2230 SW Kingsrow Road

Topeka, KS 66614

785-633-2384

[greg.hoglund@sbcglobal.net](mailto:greg.hoglund@sbcglobal.net)

**BLACK & WHITE** Digital "DB" (Digital B&W) is the contest ID that goes after the Member Number:

La Crosse Area Camera Club

Cyndy Thorn

32063 Co Rd 11

Houston, MN 55943

507-450-4466

[cyndythornimagery@live.com](mailto:cyndythornimagery@live.com)

**JOURNALISM** Digital "DJ" (Digital Journalism) is the contest ID that goes after the Member Number:

Iowa City Camera Club

Randy Moyer

1021 Dover St.

Iowa City, IA 52240

319-354-4265

[rmoyer8772@aol.com](mailto:rmoyer8772@aol.com)

**NATURE** Digital "DN" (Digital Nature) is the contest ID that goes after the Member Number:

Western Wisconsin Photo Club

Terry Butler

1620 Wexford Way

Woodbury, MN 55125-7502

612-270-1653

[n4ccontest@wiphotoclub.com](mailto:n4ccontest@wiphotoclub.com)

**PICTORIAL** (Color) Digital "DP" (Digital Pictorial) is the contest ID that goes after the Member Number:

SW Shutterbug Camera Club

Kim Walter

1559 210th Street

Corning, IA. 50841

712-621-1862

[shutterbugsN4C@gmail.com](mailto:shutterbugsN4C@gmail.com)

**TRAVEL** Digital "DT" (Digital Travel) is the contest ID that goes after the Member Number: **Be sure to include the STATE or COUNTRY of the image in the title.**

Duluth-Superior Camera Club

Lucy Kragness  
505 N. 4th Ave. W.  
Duluth, MN 55806  
281-348-0475  
[lucykragness@gmail.com](mailto:lucykragness@gmail.com)

## **SEND NEW MEMBER NUMBERS AND NAMES TO KEN JOHNSON**

N4C Supplies & Forms - on the web.

Entry forms, Reports and more. Make your job easier - Check it out.

<http://n4c.us/Supplies-Forms.htm>

A club will normally have up to 8 entries for a contest. A typical image file name list might look like:

(USE YOUR CLUB NAME AND MEMBER NUMBER INSTEAD OF DA044 - zero "0" 44 not a letter "O")

(USE DA, DB, DJ, DN, DP, or DT for the Contest Code - This example is for the Digital Nature Contest)

(Notice commas separating the data in the file names) 01,DA044,DN,Deer.jpg

03,DA022,DN,Grand Arch.jpg

04,DA033,DN,Teton Reflection.jpg

05,DA037,DN,White Water.jpg

06,DA002,DN,Shadows.jpg

07,DA025,DN,Horsetail Falls.jpg

08,DA018,DN,Soaring Eagle.jpg

Members should submit entries with filenames similar to the above except for the sequence numbers. The club N4C Rep will rename the files to include the sequence numbers. The club N4C Rep may want to keep things simple for the club members and handle ALL the file naming - how this is done is left to the club. The sequence numbers will determine the sequencing of the image in the judging line-up. All the contest entries will be sorted in alpha-numeric sequence by filename so this will mix up club entries for judging. The 01's from all the clubs will be judged first and the 08's at the end.

Encourage your members to explore the N4C website where they will find a lot of photography to study, and photography links with an unlimited number of tutorials and educational videos to learn from. <http://n4c.us/>

## **PRINT ENTRIES - JUDGING CLUBS FOR March**

Print contest rules are in the attached N4C Contest Rules.

Entries must be received by these clubs by March 15.

**Because of experienced delays in mail and shipping, other clubs recommend that you also send an email to these judging clubs to expect your entries.**

**Ideally, give them your tracking number.**

**Send both Nature Prints and Black & White, AND**

**Send both Travel Prints and Journalism Prints to:**

Sioux City Camera Club [Correction from Directory] [Sioux City is doing four contests]

Carl Hardy



3236 Maplewood St.  
Sioux City, IA 51104  
712-281-3345  
[torchenterprises72@gmail.com](mailto:torchenterprises72@gmail.com)

**Send both Pictorial Color Prints and Altered Reality Prints to:**

Print Color & Print Altered Reality  
Kuntemeier Camera Club  
JoAnn Kuntemeier  
536 Cedar Court  
Taylors Falls, MN 55084  
651-465-6827  
[joakun@midco.net](mailto:joakun@midco.net)

Ken Johnson [web@n4c.us](mailto:web@n4c.us),  
A Digital Contest Chair  
Enjoy photography whether or not it is yours!

## **N4C February (2025-02) Contest Results**

### ***Digital Altered Reality***

1st Night Time Visitor - Bob Rude, Iowa City  
2nd Alien Skull - Kevin McTague, Dubuque  
3rd Old Master Painting of Rooster at Dawn - Jennifer Novack Haar, Omaha  
HM Morning Fog on the Mississippi - Chap Achen, Western Wisconsin  
HM Sundown in the City - Kathy Bury, Saint Paul  
HM Rising of the Suns - Mike Barker, Omaha  
HM Quail on Bowl of Eggs - Peggy Boike, Saint Paul  
68 entries from 17 clubs. Judging Club: Black Hills Photography Club. Chair: Kevin Segrud. Judges: Craig Alberty, Teresa Hofer, Markus Erk. Comments: Some great artist. Some could use more work on their photos.

### ***Digital B&W***

1st Old-fashioned Fun - Marianne Diericks, Western Wisconsin  
2nd An Evening Swim - Anna Frissell, Fargo-Moorhead  
3rd Attitude - Suzy Adams, Black Hills  
HM Echo of Elegance - Tara Burian, Black Hills  
HM LoneRanger - Stephonie Schmitz, Dubuque  
HM The Gaze - Jackie Feil, Fargo-Moorhead  
HM rose-2 - Brian Narveson, La Crosse Area  
HM Sand surfer - Diane Sisko, Western Wisconsin  
HM Bridge-Over-Creek - Sheldon Farwell, Great River  
90 entries from 18 clubs. Judging Club: Minnesota Valley Photography Club. Chair: Rob Hubbard. Judges: Alan Kiecker, Craig Peterson, Rob Hubbard.

### ***Digital Journalism***

1st Necaxa header - Karen Leonard, Saint Paul  
2nd The Tailor - Dorothy Sansom, Omaha  
3rd Air Show Highlight - Allen Kurth, Omaha  
HM Bunny Hop Pioneer - Steve Fleagle, Iowa City  
HM Collision On The Mat - Ken Cheung, Minnesota Valley  
HM Confident Companions - Marty Barker, Omaha  
HM OMG! - Human Plant Startles Passers-by in Gene Leahy Mall - Nikki McDonald, Omaha  
HM Aeromyth\_The\_Ultimate\_Aerosmith\_Tribute - Doug Conrad, Sioux City  
73 entries from 16 clubs. Judging Club: Western Wisconsin Photo Club. Chair: Terry Butler. Judges: Chap Achen, MJ Springett, Kimberly Vetterkind.

### ***Digital Nature***

- 1st Fiery-throated Hummingbird - Marianne Diericks, Western Wisconsin
- 2nd Snouted Frog - Martha Farwell, Great River
- 3rd Bighorn Sheep - David Skoog, La Crosse Area
- HM Crane Lift - Marge Springett, Western Wisconsin
- HM Berries for Breakfast - Markus Erk, Black Hills
- HM Coyote - Scott Bohaty, Lincoln
- HM Neighborhood Fox - Mike Cronin, Lincoln
- HM Banana Spider - William Fritsch, Minnesota Valley
- HM Good\_Catch - Gary Gilbert, Sioux City
- HM Mystic Owl - Ken Cheung, Minnesota Valley

99 entries from 20 clubs. Judging Club: Shutterbug Camera Club. Chair: John F. Larson, Jr.. Judges: Michelle Hall, Sarah Bissell, Karla Gerst. Comments: The judges had a difficult narrowing down to get down to the required number of Honorable Mention images.

### ***Digital Pictorial***

- 1st Rainy Day Women #12 - Jeff Westgard, Fargo-Moorhead
- 2nd Snowy-Cardinal - Sheldon Farwell, Great River
- 3rd The Work Never Ends.2 - Beverly Hawkins, Women's Color
- HM Oooh! So good! - Margaret West, Omaha
- HM Keystone Bridge,Elkader IA - Kevin McTague, Dubuque
- HM Comet C2023 A3 - Scott Bohaty, Lincoln
- HM Fruit and Wine - Martha Farwell, Great River
- HM Partners for Life - Marianne Diericks, Western Wisconsin
- HM Escape - Paul Zahorosky, Duluth-Superior
- HM Out of the Mist - Laurie McShane, Duluth-Superior

96 entries from 18 clubs. Judging Club: Des Moines Camera Club. Chair: Janie Lawson. Judges: Terry Holdren, Diane Lowry, Jacqueline Stoken.

### ***Digital Travel***

- 1st Dawn on the Serengeti Africa - Mariann Cyr, Western Wisconsin
- 2nd Head of the Class,China - David Wheaton, Saint Paul
- 3rd A Brilliant Light Show Over Historic Grue Church Trail County ND - Sharon Watson, Fargo-Moorhead
- HM Minnesota Beauty - Susan Anderson, Fargo-Moorhead
- HM Reflection at Half Dome,Yosemite NP California - Martha Farwell, Great River
- HM Low Sky\_View from Triangle X Ranch\_Wyoming - John Calvin, Fargo-Moorhead
- HM Before The Rice Harvest Viet Nam - Marc Ye, Saint Paul
- HM Milwaukee Art Museum - Milwaukee WI - Craig Peterson, Minnesota Valley
- HM Lift Bridge Duluth, Minnesota - Deb Teller, Omaha

83 entries from 17 clubs. Judging Club: Dubuque Camera Club. Chair: Cara Pusateri. Judges: Susanne Wright, Ken Kiss, Chuck Isenhardt.

### ***Altered Reality Prints***

- 1st Nishay - Ty Smith, Mitchell
- 2nd Big City Tiny Planet - Stephonie Schmitz, Dubuque
- 3rd Clouds and Waves at the Pier - Dwight Tomes, Des Moines
- HM Sea Apple and Anemone - Carl Hardy, Sioux City
- HM Rare Northern Light Desert Cactus - Tim Zeltinger, Minot

12 entries from 6 clubs. Judging Club: Fargo-Moorhead Camera Club. Chair: Bruce Bernstein. Judges: Miranda Lavalley, Zach Lavalley, Pam Bernstein.

### ***B & W Pictorial Prints***

- 1st Conch - Mary Klauer, Sioux City
- 2nd Storm Brewing Over Fort Randall - Doug Conrad, Sioux City
- 3rd 2816 Rolling Down the Tracks - Tim Zeltinger, Minot
- HM Persimmons & Yellow Bowl - Peggy Boike, Saint Paul

HM Aw Mom! Do I Gotta Wear This Tie!? - Debbie Bates, Southwest Iowa Shutterbugs  
HM Wild Spirit of the Open Land - Ken Epstein, Saint Paul  
26 entries from 8 clubs. Judging Club: Dubuque Camera Club. Chair: Stephonie Schmitz. Judges: Bob Felderman, Henry Matthiessen III, Cara Pussateri. Comments: Great images, tough to judge. Nice variations in BW tones.

### ***Journalism Prints***

1st Fireman - Drago Nemec, Photoshooters Club  
2nd Impromptu Party at the Plymouth - Dwight Tomes, Des Moines  
3rd Preparing for the Corner - Robert Lahti, Duluth-Superior  
15 entries from 7 clubs. Judging Club: Minot Camera Club. Chair: Tim Zeltinger. Judges: Adam Papin, Beth Kjelson, Tammy Sanders. Comments: Some prints were well used (bent, and not in good shape). Overall great shots but some maybe more editorial than PJ.

### ***Nature Prints***

1st Yellow Lady Slipper - Drago Nemec, Photoshooters Club  
2nd Collecting Pollen on a Purple Flower - Janie Lawson, Des Moines  
3rd Mountain Lion - Patty Foster, Des Moines  
HM Hawkeyes - Chuck Stowe, Des Moines  
20 entries from 8 clubs. Judging Club: Dubuque Camera Club. Chair: Stephonie Schmitz. Judges: Tim Ollendick, Gordon Rath, Cara Pussateri. Comments: Nice variety in subject matter. Lots of quality images.

### ***Pictorial Prints (Color)***

1st Autumn Walk - Ed Hohenstein, Sioux City  
2nd Mary Queen of Peace.jpg - Carl Hardy, Sioux City  
3rd Sunrise on River Dredge - Bob Felderman, Dubuque  
HM Sunset on the Dock - Mitch Keller, Sioux City  
HM Milky Way at Neal Smith Refuge - Patty Foster, Des Moines  
HM The Road to Banff - Tim Zeltinger, Minot  
30 entries from 9 clubs. Judging Club: Fargo-Moorhead Camera Club. Chair: Bruce Bernstein. Judges: Miranda Lavalley, Zach Lavalley, Pam Bernstein.

### ***Travel Prints***

1st Caddo Lake Karnock TX - Debbie Bates, Southwest Iowa Shutterbugs  
2nd Rainbow Falls Watkin Glen NY - James Durrant, Dubuque  
3rd Warm Light at Dream Lake CO - Ron Tigges, Dubuque  
HM Split Rock Light House MN - Drago Nemec, Photoshooters Club  
HM Purple Palisade Sunset IL - Henry Matthiessen II, Dubuque  
24 entries from 8 clubs. Judging Club: Minot Camera Club. Chair: Tim Zeltinger. Judges: Beth Kjelson, Tammy Sanders, Chris Pheil. Comments: Some prints are in tough shape. Great images all around..

### ***Digital Altered Reality***

1st **Night Time Visitor - Bob Rude, Iowa City**



## *Digital Black & White*

1st Old-fashioned Fun - Marianne Diericks, Western Wisconsin



## *Digital Journalism*

1st Necaxa header - Karen Leonard, Saint Paul





## *Digital Nature*

1st Fiery-throated Hummingbird - Marianne Diericks, Western Wisconsin



## *Digital Pictorial*

1st Rainy Day Women #12 - Jeff Westgard, Fargo-Moorhead



## *Digital Travel*

1st Dawn on the Serengeti Africa - Mariann Cyr, Western Wisconsin



## *Altered Reality Prints*

1st Nishay - Ty Smith, Mitchell

Not available

2nd Big City Tiny Planet - Stephonie Schmitz, Dubuque

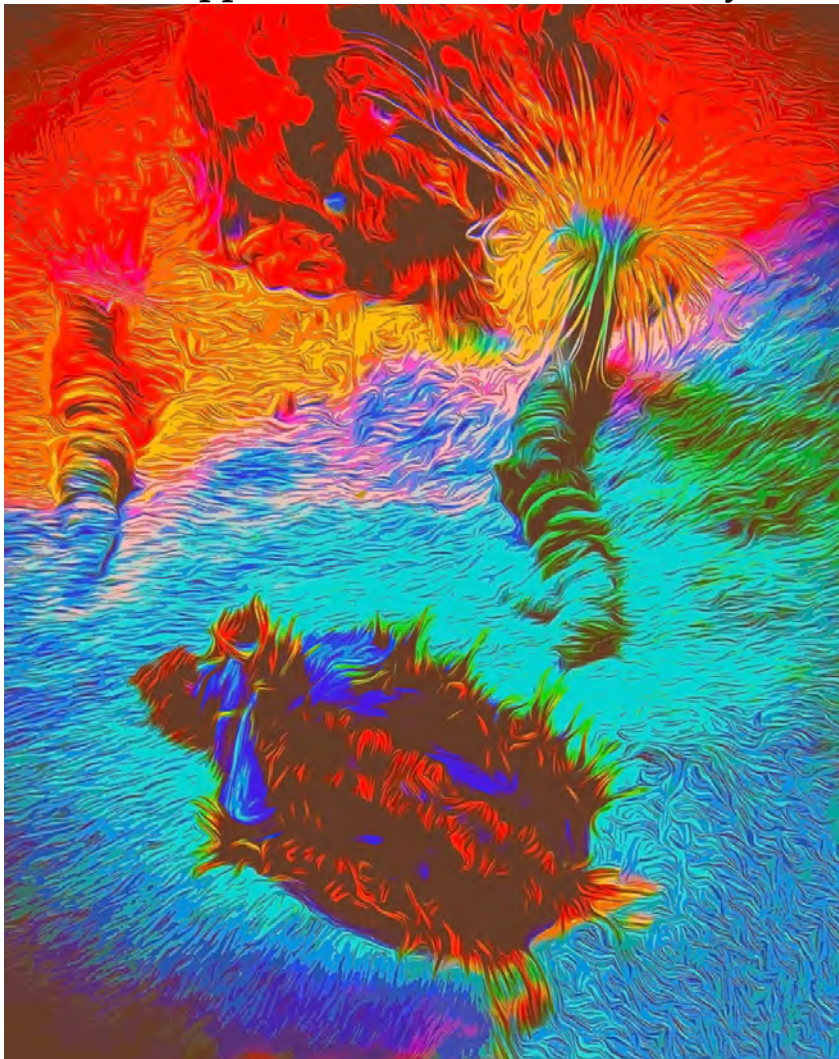




**3rd Clouds and Waves at the Pier - Dwight Tomes, Des Moines**



**HM Sea Apple and Anemone - Carl Hardy, Sioux City**



**HM Rare Northern Light Desert Cactus - Tim Zeltinger, Minot**



***B & W Pictorial Prints***

**1st Conch - Mary Klauer, Sioux City**





**2nd Storm Brewing Over Fort Randall - Doug Conrad, Sioux City**



**3rd 2816 Rolling Down the Tracks - Tim Zeltinger, Minot**



**HM Wild Spirit of the Open Land - Ken Epstein, Saint Paul**



**HM Aw Mom! Do I Gotta Wear This Tie!? - Debbie Bates, Southwest Iowa Shutterbugs**





**HM Persimmons & Yellow Bowl - Peggy Boike, Saint Paul**



***Journalism Prints***

**1st House on Fire - Drago Nemec, Photoshooters Club**



## 2nd Impromptu Party at the Plymouth - Dwight Tomes, Des Moines



## 3rd Preparing for the Corner - Robert Lahti, Duluth-Superior





## *Nature Prints*

**1st Yellow Lady Slipper - Drago Nemec, Photoshooters Club**



**2nd Collecting Pollen on a Purple Flower - Janie Lawson, Des Moines**



**3rd Mountain Lion - Patty Foster, Des Moines**



**HM Hawkeyes - Chuck Stowe, Des Moines**





*Pictorial Prints (Color)*

1st Autumn Walk - Ed Hohenstein, Sioux City



2nd Mary Queen of Peace,jpg - Carl Hardy, Sioux City





**3rd Sunrise on River Dredge - Bob Felderman, Dubuque**



**HM Sunset on the Dock - Mitch Keller, Sioux City**

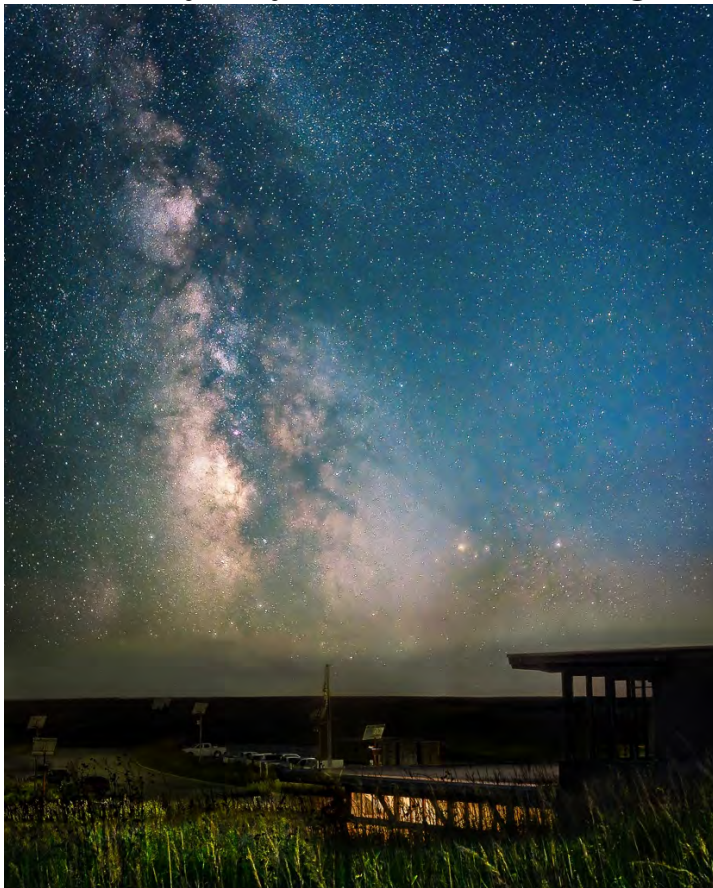




**HM The Road to Banff - Tim Zeltinger, Minot**



**HM Milky Way at Neal Smith Refuge - Patty Foster, Des Moines**





## *Travel Prints*

**1st Caddo Lake Karnock TX - Debbie Bates, Southwest Iowa  
Shutterbugs**



**2nd Rainbow Falls Watkin Glen NY - James Durrant, Dubuque**





**3rd Warm Light at Dream Lake CO - Ron Tigges, Dubuque**



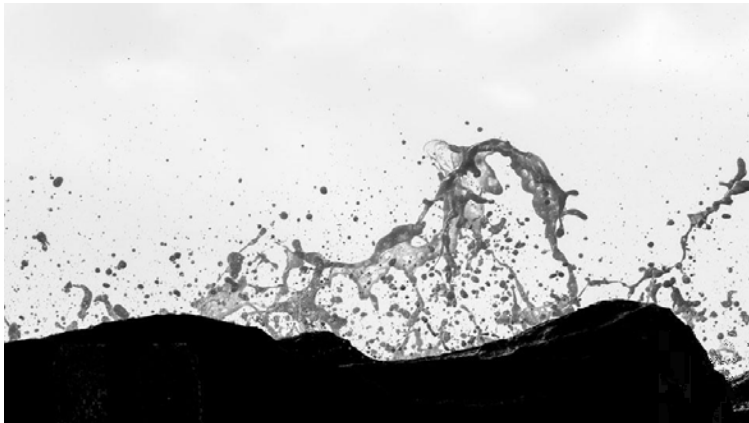
**HM Purple Palisade Sunset IL - Henry Matthiessen II, Dubuque**





## 44 Tips to Improve Your Photography

By [Todd Vorenkamp](#) |



**1. Shoot every day** Like any skill, the more you do it, the better you can get. The best camera you have is the one in your hand, so if you aren't out with your full DSLR kit, don't be afraid to take great photos with your cell phone camera or a point-and-shoot. Photography is photography, make pictures with a camera. Any camera.

**2. Always have your camera near** Pull up a chair and I can describe two amazing scenes that have been indelibly embedded in my mind. Unfortunately, for the first, my camera was broken (I was at sea, far from a camera store). For the second, it was out of reach (I was flying). I have considered learning to draw or paint so I can make a "picture" of these two moments. The moral of these stories: have a camera within reach. You never know what will happen or what you will see.

**3. Read your manual** Camera manuals aren't engaging reading, but they do tell you a lot about how to use your camera. Spend a night or two with your manual and get intimate with your camera. This will help you every time you photograph. Most manuals are now available electronically, so know where to find it, or save it on your mobile device for reference in the field.



**4. Check your settings / know your gear** I have often been tempted to put the following note on a sticker and affix it to my LCD screen: “Check your ISO, dummy.” If I had a nickel for each time I went out in the sunlight with my ISO at 800 or higher after shooting the previous evening in a dark restaurant, I would own a newer camera. Know what your settings are and how to change them quickly.



**5. Change viewpoint / angle** We see the world from eye level, and most people’s eyes are, generally, at roughly the same height. Should your photographs constantly record the world from the same altitude as your eyes? You will be amazed at how shooting from your knees, or a high ground, will change your image. Watch a documentary film about a documentary photographer and see how they move and silently wonder how many pairs of pants they wear out by constantly kneeling to shoot from low angles.

**6. Know your meter** Know your camera’s [metering modes](#) and use them to your advantage. When you frame an image, see the light and then meter for how you want your scene to be exposed. Is the lighting flat? Is a ray of light illuminating your subject? Do you want the background to melt into darkness? Your camera will help you achieve your goal; you just have to tell it how to do it. Practice metering and setting exposure.

**7. Know your shooting/exposure modes** Similar to the last tip, your camera is smart, but it needs help from you from time to time. Some will tell you to always shoot manual. [I disagree](#). Know how to shoot manual, but also know when other [shooting/exposure modes](#) will be advantageous for your particular photographic goal(s).

**8. Know your focus modes** If you use autofocus, and you likely do, the camera’s autofocus is either going to make the picture or ruin it. Know what the [autofocus modes](#) do and how to adjust focus if the camera suddenly decides it thinks it knows better than you what part of the frame you want in focus.



**9. Study photos – but not too much** Study the photographs of others. What do you like? What do you dislike? What would you improve? Is it perfect? Why, then, is it perfect? Look. Enjoy. Remember. Soak it in. But, don't forget to go out and make your own images!

**10. Read photo books** Books and websites have helpful tips (I hope this counts). But, not all are created equal. Find writers who you connect with through their writing and find writers who give good advice. I am a big fan of “basic photography” books and, to this day, even with a Masters degree in the topic, I populate my bookshelf with inspirational books written for beginner photographers.

**11. Learn/Workshops** The only substitute for learning through reading (or watching videos) is to make images yourself. Take a class. Attend a workshop. Similar to books and websites, these are not all created equal, but, the one thing they should do is immerse you in photography for a night or a weekend, or more. Being immersed in the art and craft is as important as anything else.

**12. Use your histogram** In digital photography, the [histogram](#) is the best way to evaluate your exposure for accuracy. The LCD screen can be misleading. Knowing how to read your histogram might be the difference between thinking you have a great photo and truly having a great photo.



**13. Shoot raw, highest-resolution JPEG, or film** Shooting raw gives you the best performance from your sensor. That is a fact. However, raw shooting isn't practical for every photographer (or camera). So, if you aren't going to shoot raw, shoot the highest-resolution JPEG that your camera allows. This way, even if you think you are just taking snapshots, you will have the ability to make a large print if you find that you captured an image you really like. Or, forget the digital raw vs. JPEG debate and shoot film. Case closed!

**14. Compose meticulously** There is a nature/nurture argument about composition. However, study the “rules” and observe composition in other images to help you “feel” what works best. Then, try to use that knowledge to your advantage. Be deliberate about your composition, if time allows.

**15. Symmetry** Along the same lines, if you are going for symmetry, make sure you nail it. A few inches in one direction can upset the image's symmetry, and your audience (and you) will know you were going for symmetry and missed. Photography can be a game of inches.

**16. Pay attention to the frame edges** The image is more than the subject (usually). Scrutinize the corners and the sides and top and bottom of your frame. Is everything working together well, or is something completely out of place? Can you adjust to remove the “noise” of a busy scene? Look at the whole so the whole does not detract from your subject.



**17. Pay attention to the background** Evaluate your scene, especially in portraiture. Is that a tree growing out of the subject’s head, or just a funky new hat? Isolate your subjects from the background by adjusting depth of field, moving the camera, or moving the subject – unless the subject is the background.

**18. Get closer** Robert Capa famously said, “If your pictures aren’t good enough, you aren’t close enough.” He was 100% right. Fill your frame with the subject, if you can. This is one of the most difficult things to do in photography, as we sometimes worry about being invasive to a stranger, or lazily reach for a telephoto lens to “cheat” and pretend we got close. Get closer and see your imagery improve.

**19. Slow down** Of course, there are times when you need a quick draw, but there is something to be said for planning and being deliberate. Think about the shot. Visualize the results and calculate what you need to do to try to achieve it. Put your plan into action. Wait for elements to come together, if needed, and then make a photograph.

**20. Use a tripod** Nothing slows you down like a tripod. This is a good thing. Did you just breeze over #19? The tripod won’t let you do that. Also, as an added bonus, the tripod will hold your camera steady and help you get a sharper image!





**21. Practice good technique** The way you hold your camera can make a big difference. The way you stand while shooting can make a big difference. The way you breathe when you release the shutter can make a big difference. It all adds up and can make or break your photograph. Learn and practice these fundamentals.

**22. Look for light** Light is everything in photography. Spend your time looking for light, even if you aren't taking photos. Look for sun beams and breaks, reflections, shadows, natural light, artificial light. See how light interacts with the environment. See light.

**23. Embrace shade** The wonderful side effect of light is shadow. Shadow is as valuable as light and gives depth and shape to objects. Use shadow in your images. Don't run from shadow. Embrace it.

**24. Patience** Is the light not right? Is the subject in the wrong spot? Sometimes the wrongs of a photo can become rights, if you have time to let the rights happen. Modern life is much faster than it was long ago. Use photography to slow it down and enjoy moments in time. Then, capture them with your camera.



**25. Know the rules, and break them** Cliché, but true. An intentionally over- or underexposed image is usually much more compelling than one that was incorrectly exposed accidentally. The only good blur is intentional blur. Photography is aesthetic and you can explore the fringes of what looks good and what doesn't. But, have a reason to be at the fringe, because the "my camera settings were messed up" excuse is not a good reason for promoting soft focus or motion blur. The photo may be compelling, but intentionally compelling is the better way to go.

**26. Know your lenses** Different lenses do different things to an image. Know how your telephotos compress and your wide-angles distort. Use the best lens for your photographic vision. Fisheye portraits are fun, but not great for professional headshots. Sometimes you only have your one lens. Know its strengths and weaknesses. For all your lenses, know which apertures are sharpest and know when you lose sharpness.

**27. Don't overload your quiver** A heavy camera bag is no fun, unless someone else is carrying it for you. Pack only what you need and hope you didn't leave something important behind. Photography can become a chore when you are overloaded with gear. Minimize and travel light. Your shoulders and back will thank you. So will your spirit.

**28. Know your surroundings** When you look through a viewfinder, you narrow your field of view of the world around you. Situational awareness is critical. Are you standing in the middle of a busy street? Are you blocking others from a great view? Are you in a bad section of town? Be aware of what is happening around you both for safety and courtesy and to see and capture more images.

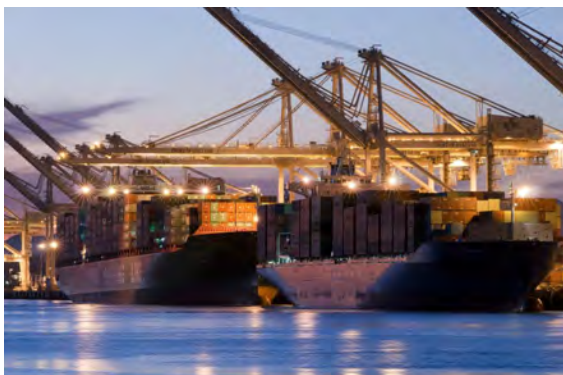


**29. Know the weather** Keep a weather eye on the horizon. Weather can play an important role in your image: wind, clouds, sun, rain, snow, lightning, etc. Weather can help make an image, or ruin your whole day. Use the weather to make better photos. Wear sunscreen. Wear a hat. Stay warm. Stay cool. Stay dry. Be prepared and be safe.

**30. Celestial awareness** Long the purview of the night photographer, knowing when and where celestial bodies will rise and set can be critical to your imagery. Planning helps make better images at all times. Of course, you might just have to play the cards you are dealt, but, if you give a nod to studying the rotation of the Earth, you might stack the deck in your favor.

**31. Analyze your old images** Be your harshest critic. Internalize it. Study your images and learn from your own mistakes. Or, if you find your images are perfect, quit before they are not!

**32. Try a prime lens** Zoom lenses are convenient and optically very good, but there is not yet a substitute for a top-quality prime lens. A zoom can mask laziness in photography. The prime forces you to not only think, but to move, as well. This will open up more opportunities than it will close.



**33. Photo project/concept** There is certainly a place for random snapshots in the world of photography but, a coherent photo project, especially when it is generated from an internal concept driven by passion can self-inspire you to create a solid body of work. Do you want to tell a story? Do you want to document social or physical change? Use your camera to illustrate your thoughts.

**34. Abstracts** See the small parts of a scene. Look for the trees in the forest. The light or shadow may be creating an image inside your image. Find it. Capture it. Some photographers know nothing but the abstract. Some know no abstractions. Find your own balance. Explore the scene and create.

**35. Photographing pretty things** Flowers, sunsets, mountains, and babies are already pretty. Your camera simply proves that point. There is nothing wrong with photographing pretty things—I do it all the time—but sometimes you can surprise yourself by using your camera to make something unattractive suddenly attractive, or, at least, visually interesting. The camera and photographer can combine to possess the power to capture what the eye might disregard.

**36. Editing** It is likely that not every shot you took was great, so look hard, be critical, and discard images that do not make the cut. Granted, photography is subjective, and someone might love a shot that you do not love, but, you are the most important viewer of your work, so only show what you love.



**37. Critique** Open yourself to critique after you have critiqued yourself. Put on your armor, but know that, again, photography is subjective, so listen respectfully to opinions and be open-minded so that you may learn and grow—especially if you agree with them. But remember, always, if you love an image that you have made, no one should be able to take that away from you. If you hang it on your wall or display it on your computer screen and enjoy looking at it, you have made a successful image.

**38. Develop a style** If your photos look like everyone else's, there is nothing wrong with that. However, if you want your personality to shine through your images, then experiment and find a style that suits your artistic vision. Be consistent with your style, but also realize that your style might not fit every shooting situation. Don't force it. Always know the fundamentals so you can fall back on them when needed.

**39. Search yourself for improvement, not your gear** A great photographer can make a great photograph with any camera. A poor photographer can make a poor photograph with the world's most expensive camera. Photography is a technologically based art form, but the technology does not make the art, the human behind the camera does. Do not look for solutions in something that runs on batteries and arrives in a box.



**40. Study art** Other forms of art can teach and inspire the photographer, especially painting. I prefer photographic art exhibits, but, when I am in the presence of paintings, I study them to see how the artist used color, light, shadow, line, composition, etc, to make the image successful – or not.



**41. Don't lose the moment** Those two moments I mentioned above, when I did not have a camera to capture them, I remember vividly because I was present and I was not looking through a viewfinder. I have thousands of images from a 10-day trip to Eastern Europe, but today I struggle to tell friends what city I was standing in when I took a particular photo. You can get lost in your camera's viewfinder and the process of making photos. Remember to live first, experience the moment, be present, and only then try to capture it.

**42. Look for images** Even if you are without a camera (Why didn't you take #2 to heart?), look for photographs. Not every camera can capture every virtual photograph, but your eye and mind certainly can. Constantly see the world around you and look for photographs, even if they are impossible to capture with the gear you have in your bag or front pocket. Look for photographs. Look for photographs.

**43. Experiment** Push yourself. Push your gear. Experiment with different settings, scenes, lights, darks, colors, everything. You will never know what you can capture until you capture it. The magic of digital photography is that each image is virtually free, so the only thing you may waste is a fraction of a second. Free your mind. Be creative with your camera.

**44. Have fun** If you aren't enjoying photography, #1 through #43 are not going to help. Smile behind the lens. Create art. Capture moments. Share images. Get outside. Explore inside. But, regardless of your results, have fun with photography. Nothing else really matters – not even the photograph.



<https://www.anseladams.com> Take a look at this remarkable link taken from North Shore Camera Club. (This is a club which was a former member of N4C).

<https://www.photoshopessentials.com> Another great site.

<https://photonaturalist.com> And another.



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***“Where Names Become Faces and Faces Become Friends”***