

2017 Calendar Photographers Capture All Seasons and All Hours of North Dakota's Beauty

By Kylie Blanchard

The 2017 *North Dakota Horizons* calendar captures the beauty of North Dakota across the state. Its 12 unique pictures highlight the state's breathtaking scenery across all seasons and all hours of the day from a frozen, foggy Missouri River and starry Badlands sky to a red blanketed dawn and a deep gray evening storm. Below, this year's featured photographers share how they captured their photographs and love of North Dakota in this year's calendar.



Scott Seiler captured this year's cover photograph *Sunflower Kaleidoscope, West of Harwood* while scouting in the early morning. "I took several wide shots of this beautiful field, which was in its peak condition for yellow beauty," he notes, adding the photos came to life when he focused on an individual sunflower. "It was its shade of yellow enhanced by the sunrise, the texture and curls of the petals, and the mathematical symmetry of the center of the sunflower that created a complex beautiful photo."

Seiler first took an interest in photography nearly 40 years ago growing up on his family's ranch near Raleigh. "North Dakota photography is unique because there are so many different types

of geographies that offer a variety of opportunities."

He says he is honored to be chosen for the 2017 cover. "People love sunflowers because they have such positive energy, have brilliant colors, and are a great piece of North Dakota. I'm discovering the more photos I take of North Dakota, it opens my eyes to an even greater beauty of the state."



Crystal Ann captured January's featured photo *Snowball Tree, Dickinson* on the day she was moving. "When we woke up in the early morning, I could see the frost even in the dawn darkness. I grabbed my gear and went driving around town. I stopped at this park, and was running through knee deep snow. I had taken several images of this location, but this one tree stood out to me. It looked like snowballs on the branches."

She has had an interest in photography since childhood, but took it to a more professional level after purchasing her first DSLR camera. "What drew me even more into photography was losing my older brother in an accident in 2004. During that time I was constantly outdoors, especially watching the sunsets. I wanted to capture nature's beauty and share it with everyone."

She says she has continued to pursue photography to help inspire people to get out and do what they love even in hard times. "To simply get out and enjoy nature's beauty," she adds.

Her favorite scenes to photograph in North Dakota are the dramatic skies and storms. "The areas of flatness are absolutely breathtaking because of the wide open endless skies. Being in this state has helped me find the simplest beauty. I am so honored and thrilled to have one of my images in my home state's calendar."





Marshall Lipp's photograph *The Night Train, Bismarck-Mandan* is the February featured photograph. He captured the image on a winter night that was 22 degrees below zero with no wind. "I went out that night knowing there would be some fog on the river and I knew the light was going to be there."

He says he first took an interest in photography, and particularly night photography, about eight years ago while in Europe. "I couldn't sleep in Barcelona and I wanted to shoot the city at night, so I grabbed my sister's camera and took a pic and the city just glowed," he says.

"The stars and the night sky always fascinated me," Lipp continues. "When they finally came out with cameras that could shoot at night, I just went out and fell in love with it."

He also enjoys photographing storms, the landscape of Theodore Roosevelt National Park and Cross Ranch State Park, and areas south of Bismarck-Mandan. "There is so much public area in North Dakota and it allows the freedom to go where not many people have and provide photos they have never seen before."

Lipp says he particularly likes photographing in the winter. "I love bundling up in the winter and going out," he notes, adding the state's changing seasons keep photography interesting. "North Dakota changes so much in the fall, winter, spring and summer. It's like four different worlds."



April's feature photograph *Milky Way Night, Badlands* was captured by **Dave Bruner** near midnight. "I knew where this area of the Badlands was, and thought it would make a nice setting for this Milky Way scene," he says. "The camera was set up on a tripod as it was a long exposure."

Bruner, who began taking pictures at the age of 12, has become more serious about landscape photography in the last eight years. "Shooting landscapes in North Dakota is a favorite of mine due to the clear sunrises and sunsets that occur. I like the western part of the state due to the rolling hills and terrain in that area, but I find a lot to photograph in all areas of the state."

Bruner, who has three other photographs featured in the calendar, says the state's seasons provide a diversity to photographs of similar landscapes. He notes North Dakota's rural setting also lends itself to great photography. "Being North Dakota is still such a rural state, it is very easy to be out in the country within a few minutes from one of our cities taking landscape photos."



May's featured photograph *Spring Rain, Wahpeton* was taken by **Duane Strand** at his home. "The photo was taken in my back yard after a light rain," he notes. "I generally will take a walk in the yard after a rain to see what





new photo opportunities are there.”

Strand has been interested in photography since high school and says he finds the practice intriguing because of its limitless possibilities. “Photography in North Dakota is always entertaining. The skies before or after a thunderstorm are magnificent.”

He primarily photographs the Red River Valley, but notes the rest of the state has a lot to offer, as well. “The seasons are a major part of the North Dakota mystique. There are not many places in the United States that have the four distinct seasons we do.”



Brian Heskin captured June’s feature photograph *Storm on the Prairie, Pierce County* while following his passion for storm and nature photography. “I was driving down a gravel road south of Rugby and was keeping my eye on this beautiful shelf cloud. I was trying to figure out an angle to take a few shots before it started to rain and noticed the old building in the field. It lined up perfectly with the sky and I took about 60 shots of the same scene hoping one would turn out.”

Heskin says he has been interested in photography for about five years and picked up the practice during his addiction recovery. “Photography ended up being my savior. This July marks five years of sobriety and I couldn’t be happier.”

He says photography in North Dakota is unique. “I think it comes as a shock to some how beautiful our state truly is. For people who have never experienced North Dakota, the common belief is that we are a boring flat piece of barren land that gets really cold in the winter. That stereotype has always bothered me, and I love having the ability to show off all the little gems this great state has to offer.”



Durand (Duke) Johnson of Desert Skies Photography captured September’s feature photograph *Celestial Reflection – Venus & the Moon, Valley City* during a trip to North Dakota. “I knew Venus and the moon would

be near each other in the sky for a few days,” he says. “On a night with little wind, I thought the ponds at the fish hatchery might provide a good way to capture a reflection near sunset and a way to feature two celestial bodies. We stayed for about two hours and shot the scene as it went from sunset to early evening.”

Johnson began practicing photography in the early 1990s, but it wasn’t until he moved to Utah in 2003 that he began to visit national parks and shoot landscapes at night. “I love to photograph the night sky in North Dakota, and sunflower fields. I love the wide open spaces. My favorite conditions are when a storm is rolling in from the west. That often creates great clouds and occasionally a really wonderful sunset. My other favorite is to look for clear, starry skies at night along with an interesting foreground object.”

He says he enjoys being able to share the state’s beauty with others. “All photographers should take a trip to North Dakota during harvest to capture our amazing sunsets fueled by the grain dust in the air,” says Johnson. “Then they should stay outside to witness our clear, dark skies that are relatively undamaged by light pollution. Through the pictures we all take, we hope to inspire other people to look in ordinary places for extraordinary beauty.”



October’s featured photograph *Golden Autumn Morning, Lisbon* was captured by **Katherine Plessner**. “The tree in this photo is proclaimed to be the oldest tree in North Dakota and it is a beauty. I had photos of this tree in every season, except fall,” she says. “I was in town one autumn morning and I was happy to see the golden color glowing in the morning sun.”

Plessner says she has had a camera in her hands since high school. “I just enjoy capturing the beauty around us,” she notes. “I take photos of everything, but I love scenery shots and the grandkids, of course. We are so lucky to have our beautiful, wide open spaces and gorgeous skies.”

North Dakota’s slower pace also lends itself to many photography opportunities, says Plessner. “I can pull over



OCTOBER



NOVEMBER



DECEMBER

and stop on a gravel road if I see something and even the highways are not always that busy.”

“North Dakota is a great place to live and great photo opportunities are everywhere,” she continues. “I am excited and honored to have my photo in this great calendar.”



Erich Linser captured the December featured photo *Lostwood Lutheran Church, Stanley* during a late winter afternoon. “I was traveling and looking at the clouds,” he notes. “Holes would open and close allowing the late

afternoon sun to illuminate the countryside. The previous night, there was freezing rain, which covered everything with ice, and also gave an added reflectivity to the beaming sun.”

Linser, who started taking photographs in his teens, says

he was drawn to photography by “the ability to capture the world as I see it, in that moment in time.”

The state’s seasons play a key role in his experiences photographing North Dakota, he notes. “I love to drive gravel roads, and given the choice, I always will take the road less traveled. One of my favorite subjects to photograph in North Dakota is country churches. I’ve driven many miles looking for them, and am always surprised when I find a new one.”

“I’m very excited to have one of my images selected for the calendar,” he continues. “And I’m very happy to have the chance to share it with many people.”

Purchase your 2017 calendar online at www.ndhorizons.com or by calling 701-355-4458.

