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CELEBRATING THE ARTS | NOVEMBER 2014



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November 2014

ALFEROV | BIRD | FRIEDENBERG | JERNIGAN | NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY | SULLINS



On the cover: "Super Moon," photograph, by Ken Sullins; see page 28.

Above: "Late Afternoon," (detail), watercolor, 9" x 12", by Bryan Jernigan; see page 32.

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PHOTOGRAPHER KEN SULLINS

Shared Visions

REEXAMINING A LOST WORLD
BY DONNA CEDAR-SOUTHWORTH



"When my first child was born, I got my first real slide camera, started working to be a better photographer, and I started writing articles for outdoor magazines."

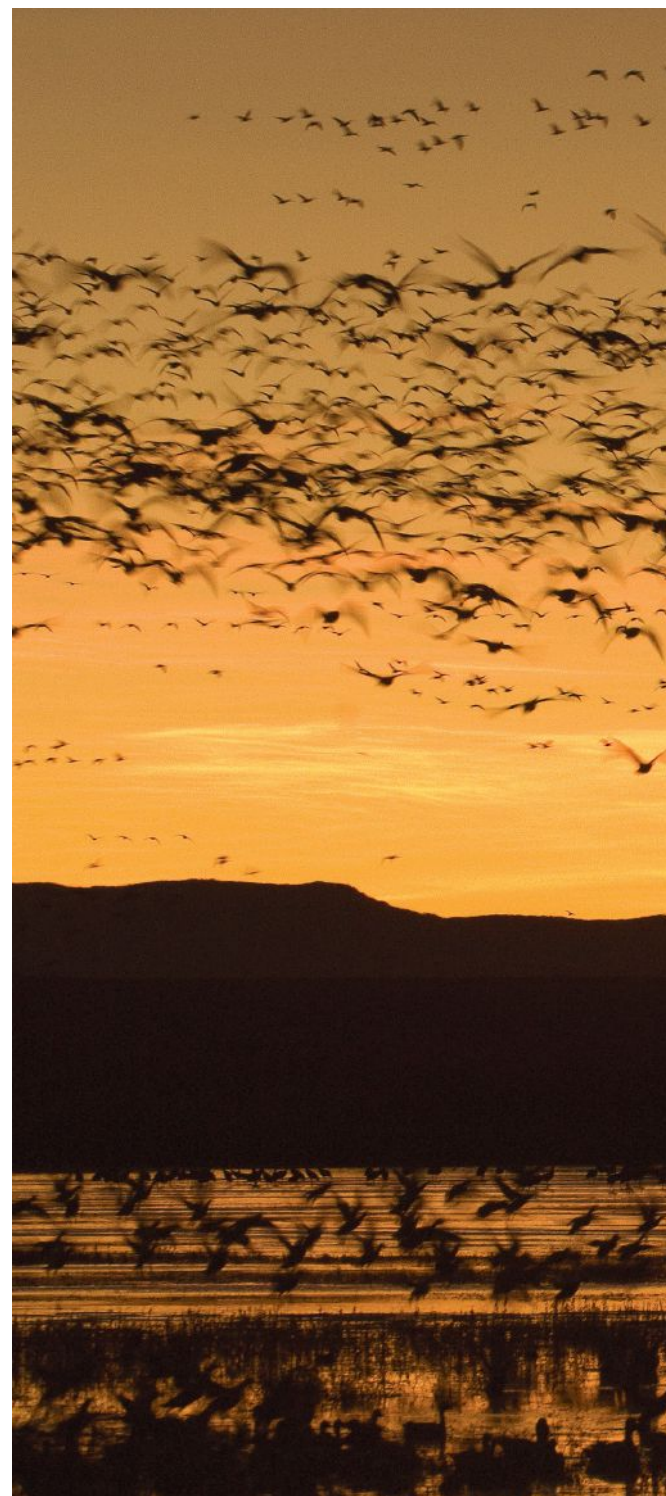
—Ken Sullins

Old abandoned homesteads in disrepair, remnants of places once populated now void of life, remote desert expanses accessible only to those who journey with purpose—these are the places that call out to fine art photographer Ken Sullins. Very much at home in this solitude, Ken spends hours and days capturing black-and-white and color images that make up his extensive body of work.

"You say things through photographs that you can't say [with words], or if you tried, you couldn't do it," says Ken. He still feels that the words that accompany his photographs are also important in communicating to the viewer.

"I'm interested in preserving origins or areas that are important to me, and I believe are worth showing others who either share those emotions or may want to. For instance, the old places in New Mexico that nobody has ever seen—there are a lot of younger people now that have never experienced...these old buildings [I photograph], and I think it's really important to show them."

A founding surgeon at Marion duPont Scott Equine Medical Center in Leesburg, Ken is no stranger to the West. Though he came to Leesburg 30 years ago with the medical center, he grew up in Alamosa, a small town in South Central Colorado just north of New Mexico. "When I was a kid living there, the desert didn't mean



to me then what it does to me now," he says. "Then it meant there were no trees, but the desert is alive." And he returns there often, now for the sole purpose of photographing the area's beauty.

Ken voluntarily enlisted in and served in the U.S. Marine Corps during the Vietnam War. He later attended Colorado School of Mines and went onto Colorado State University (CSU) where he earned his veterinary degree and a master of science in surgery. After working in private practice for five years, Ken completed a residency in large animal surgery at CSU in 1984.

All of that experience contributes very much to the



"Dawn Movement," photograph

photographer/artist/person he is today. "The things I've done in my life are not 'relaxed,' in that you don't stop to think about what a nice sunset that is or these kinds of things," says Ken. "I really started getting my appreciation for photographs...after I was a veterinarian and I spent a lot of time outside looking at things. I loved packing horses and fishing in the West. ...[W]hen my first child was born, I got my first real slide camera, started working to be a better photographer, and I started writing articles for outdoor magazines."

Ken is influenced greatly by the life and artistry of Georgia O'Keeffe. He had seen a photograph of her de-

picted in the wilderness and it inspired him greatly: "That [picture of her] is a reflection of my [own] experience in the desert and the mountains—seeing that picture and sharing her attitude with the country and the land. I enjoy being with my grandchildren and doing things, but I have also spent a lot of time in the wilderness—alone and photographing." Upon seeing O'Keeffe pictured in that same element, he felt a strong connection. "Then when I saw the work she was doing...I had to see it." So he has traveled to the sites that inspired O'Keeffe's paintings, "The Black Place" and "The White Place," and he is currently working on a series inspired by those paintings



"When I was a kid living [in South Central Colorado], the desert didn't mean to me then what it does to me now. Then it meant there were no trees, but the desert is alive."

—Ken Sullins

Above: "The House at 19273, Virginia Piedmont"; and "Barn Owl in Window, North Carolina"

Opposite: "Sandhill Cranes in Corn, New Mexico"

All are photographs.



and places. Ken notes that it is unusual for him to be inspired by painters: "It's the package—the way she lived, the solitude, the desert—it was like the perfect storm. It all came together for me."

Music is another source of inspiration for Ken, and it creates pictures in his mind. "I love music," he says. "I particularly love to watch live music. I look at somebody who's doing a really good job, who's got the entire audience going—they're really engrossed—and then I picture my work in an art gallery, and I think, 'How do I get that room going? How do I generate that kind of excitement?'"

Photography has taught Ken to look at things differently. "I've learned to think about things more," he says. "When driving down the road, there's always a composition going on. Ninety-nine percent of the time you just move on; ten percent of the time you think, 'I should shoot that but I can't stop.' Then there are the other times when you just *have* to. I like those old, original kinds of things, and I'm learning now if I didn't get [the image] then, I never would have because in many instances they're gone or boarded up."

See Ken's work at The Cooley Gallery in Leesburg and The Dairy Barn Gallery in Middleburg.

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Ken Sullins | www.kensullinsphotography.com

