

## Publisher's Commentary - Twelve Years of NPN

Text and photography copyright © Jim Erhardt. All rights reserved.

**It seems hard to believe** that we've been "at it" for this long. It has been a largely rewarding endeavor, but not without its challenges. Those challenges have always given us reason to pause, to consider our mission, and to evaluate the course we're on to achieve it.

While NPN has matured and grown better with age over the last 12 years, the Internet itself has undergone incredible growth and with that, major transformation. What was once used as simply an Internet presence/store front by commercial enterprise is now the main arena for major corporate undertakings. Back in April of 2000 when NPN's first issue went online, there was no Facebook, no Twitter and no mega-photo sites such as 500px.com. What was once primarily a venue for personal websites and small-scale e-commerce is now *big* business funded by deep VC pockets.

These new mega-social/photo sites are without a doubt a major boon to all photographers. With the huge amount of traffic these sites attract, photos posted gain immediate, wide scale exposure. What is usually measured in hundreds of views on NPN is often scaled up to thousands or even tens-of-thousands of views on these Goliath sites. If you are looking to get your work in front of as large of a global audience as possible, there is no doubt that these sites can do so very effectively.



NPN members from the [NENP Group](#) enjoy a recent photo outing at the [Butterfly Place](#) in Westford, MA. Outings such as these are often organized through NPN's regional forums.

With the emergence of sites such as these - with their slick user interfaces, cutting edge backend technology and Wall Street size funding - has NPN lost its usefulness? In the context of what the Internet has grown into, does it even remain relevant to the needs of today's nature photographers?

### The Campfire Experience

In a recent thread discussing this subject, NPN member and moderator [Preston Birdwell](#) compared participation on NPN as the online equivalent of sitting around the campfire with a group of friends. This comment struck me as being a fair and accurate depiction of what NPN is really all about - a place for nature photography enthusiasts of all ages and all skill levels to "sit around the campfire" and discuss their common passion. What NPN may lack in technology, traffic volume and funding it makes up for with its unparalleled atmosphere of friendship and camaraderie.

### It's all about Nature Photography

NPN's [mission](#) is clearly defined - the art and technique of nature photography. In fact, Google searches for phrases such as *nature photography*, *wildlife photography*, *bird photography* and even just *nature* (to name just a few) brings NPN up on the first page of search results, often in the top spot. The fact is there is no other single site on the Internet that even comes close to NPN's search engine optimization targeted for those interested in nature photography - and NPN's abundant, focused content is the reason why.

Every month for the last 12 years, we have published [articles and reviews](#) that are of interest to all nature photographers. We have been blessed with a long list of very talented writer/photographers who have made this monthly endeavor possible. Along with all of the discussions that take place in the NPN forums and the extraordinary nature photos posted in our image critique galleries, NPN remains a valuable resource to all nature photography enthusiasts - something that is reflected in our search engine rankings.

NPN's traffic remains strong as well, with a monthly average of 80,000 unique visitors viewing over 1 million pages. In

January of 2012, we had 120,763 unique visitors who viewed 1.22 million pages, consuming over 326 gigabytes of bandwidth. While this may seem insignificant compared to a site such as 500px, it's important to realize that all of our traffic is from those with an interest in *nature photography*. In this regard, NPN remains at the top of the heap.

### The Regional Group Experience

Perhaps the true "NPN campfire" experience can be found in our regional forums. The regional forums are intended for NPN members who live in the same geographical area to share ideas, locations and plan social events among themselves. While some regional groups are more active than others, it is apparent that these forums provide a perfect venue for NPN members to reach out to fellow members who live nearby. In this regard, the NPN regional forums and the opportunity they provide will remain an important part of NPN's mission. A list of these forums can be found in the **Forums** drop-down menu in the **Regional** section - we encourage you to visit them!

While the Internet grows larger and more diverse, the "NPN experience" will remain that of a small group of friends gathered around a warm campfire, discussing the only topic that has really mattered to us for the last twelve years. Like any other campfire, it's as much about the escape from the crowds and everyday living as it is about this endeavor we call nature photography, the one we find solace in and that replenishes our souls.

We will keep the campfire burning - we hope you continue to enjoy it as much as we have!

Comments on NPN nature photography articles? Send them to the [editor](#). NPN members may also log in and leave their comments below.



**Jim Erhardt** is the founder of the [Nature Photographers Network](#)™ and the publisher of *Nature Photographers Online Magazine*. To this day he remains in awe of the incredible nature photography posted on the NPN website and is humbled to be your host. Jim and his wife Donna will continue to strive to provide the best online experience possible to all nature photography enthusiasts - this is why NPN was created and will always remain it's mission!



[Home Page](#) | [Galleries & Forums](#) | [NPN News & Updates](#) | [Articles & Reviews](#) | [Membership](#) | [Terms of Service](#)

Copyright 2000 - 2012, Nature Photographers Online Magazine, Inc. All rights reserved.