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Alpacas: The South American Hummers in WNC



Story & photos by Kristalyn Bunyan, f32 Photography

The lush and fertile land of Western North Carolina supports an array of agricultural operations and wildlife. The region also boasts an amazing "go local" movement of sustainable farm-raised food and craft products.

The alpaca (the less famous—but more mysterious—South American camelid native) also gently and quietly grazes on our mountainsides, providing us not with meat but with luxuriously, soft, warm, hypoallergenic fiber. With more than 50 farms in the region with a total of 500+ alpacas in our region, fiber artists, tourists, and animal aficionados can indulge in the serenity of these beautiful creatures.



Visit a nearby alpaca farm or farmers market and be sure to bring your camera and tripod. Photographers can find endless expressions in alpacas' faces. Capture intimate gazes between mother alpacas and her young babies (known as "crias"), forever freeze an alpaca spitting match, or document the "cudding" of a dandelion.

Experiment with photo composition. Alpacas' long narrow necks and legs offer unique composition blocking and framing. Be sure to photograph the glory of the fiber's richness in



golden warm early morning or evening light. Allow shadows to dance with the alpacas as you change your perspective. Listen to their unique “humms” and laugh at the hay falling from their heads. Wait, click, smile and repeat until your memory card is full or the alpacas stop posing.

These photos were taken at Last Penny Farm Alpacas (lastpennyfarmalpacas.com) in Weaverville.

Kristalyn Bunyan (kristalyncreations.com) is an urban homesteader, artist, and traveler, and is a member of the f/32 Photography Group, an organization of photographers who share an appreciation and love of the art, meets the second Wednesday of each month at the Reuters Center on the UNCA campus at 6:30 p.m. Find out more at f32nc.com.



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