

Star-struck New Hampshire newlyweds look back on 'surreal' eclipse

Dressed in sun and moon outfits, the couple made the path of total darkness the light of their nuptials

By Carlos R. Muñoz Globe Staff, Updated April 9, 2024, 4:18 p.m.



Caitlin and Alex Harper, both 30, stand near a pasture at Shelburne Farms in Shelburne, Vt., under a totally eclipsed sun on Monday, April 8. CARMEN M. GEORGE

A day after tying the knot after a rare total solar eclipse that cast their wedding party into darkness, newlyweds Caitlin and Alex Harper were beaming over the unique and unusual experience.

Seeing her wedding pictures for the first time Tuesday, Caitlin already knew which one would make the perfect centerpiece for the couple's living room wall: A transcendental image of them posing hand-in-hand in a Vermont pasture, the awe-inspiring eclipsed sun as the backdrop.



Alex and Caitlin Harper, both 30, of Lebanon, N.H., share a kiss during their wedding celebration on Monday, April 8, during the total solar eclipse. Caitlin designed the couple's wedding attire, which was deep blue with constellations. CARMEN M. GEORGE

"When I thought we were going to do a wedding during an eclipse, that was the picture I had in mind," Caitlin said, calling it a "surreal" atmosphere. "That's what I was expecting. It's so New England with the farm."

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The couple later exchanged vows at The Ellis Inn, a bed and breakfast in Colchester, Vt.

High school sweethearts Caitlin and Alex, both 30 and from Lebanon, N.H., were surrounded by six relatives and friends — and a lot of confused farm animals — Monday afternoon as a wedding photographer documented their celestial moment at Shelburne Farms just outside of Burlington.

The awestruck couple were reminded to pose for their dream wedding shot just as the moon glided over the face of the sun and daylight flickered into darkness.



Alex and Caitlin Harper pose for wedding pictures in Shelburne, Vt., during the total solar eclipse Monday. CARMEN M. GEORGE

"Five minutes before totality, we were driving to this area on the farm," Caitlin said. "We get there just before totality happens. We are standing there watching it. ...The animals were freaking out; they didn't know what to do. That heightened the experience in a way."

They said everything went silent until nearby kids in a tree shouted in excitement at the sight they were beholding.

The first photos from their wedding day show the couple's space-themed attire designed by Caitlin, a skilled seamstress, using star-covered, deep-blue fabric she bought on Etsy.

Mere hours before the wedding, she decided to add a starry veil.

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Caitlin, a clinical pharmacist, also wore a flaming gold tiara representing the sun while Alex, a computer scientist, wore a celestial-themed cloak and gold-wire halo depicting the moon.

Anticipating a swarm of out-of-state visitors arriving for the eclipse, Carmen George, who served as both wedding photographer and officiant, arrived at the farm three hours early to secure enough parking for the bride and groom and their guests.

"Everyone that we came across was so happy when they saw their sun and moon outfits," George said. "When they saw they were getting married, there was so much joy and celebration."



Alex and Caitlin Harper peek at the eclipsed sun through protective glasses during their wedding celebration on Monday in Shelburne, Vt. CARMEN M. GEORGE

George said the photos and vows were arranged so the couple could enjoy the moment.

"It's like the world stopped for a moment and people were just unified by this celestial moment," she said. "They were in a different world."

"Was it worth it?" Caitlin said. "The answer is 'yes.'"



Alex and Caitlin Harper with one of the goats at Shelburne Farms in Shelburne, Vt., where they took their wedding photos during the total solar eclipse on Monday. CARMEN M. GEORGE