

Nightscape



DarkSky

#124 | June 2026



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Exploring ecosystems that
depend on darkness

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for the night

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DarkSky

We restore the nighttime environment and protect communities from the harmful effects of light pollution through outreach, advocacy, and conservation.

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On the cover

“Common Long-tongued Bat”

by **Alfredo Maiquez / iStock NTCo**

Costa Rica

An adult Common Long-tongued Bat (*Glossophaga soricina*) feeding at night from flower nectar. This bat species is found across Central and South America, from Mexico to Brazil, and plays a key role as a nocturnal pollinator. Feeding primarily on nectar, it uses its elongated tongue to reach deep into flowers, transferring pollen between plants, ranging from agave and cactus to banana flowers and night-flowering canopy trees. Active at night, it depends on darkness to forage efficiently and avoid predators, making it especially vulnerable to artificial light.

Nightscape

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From the Executive Director

A season of return and renewal

Spring in Tucson has arrived as a riot of color. It began with the golden haze of brittlebush and creosote, and now the saguaros are beginning to bud. This transformation signals a beloved homecoming: the return of the **Mexican long-nosed bat**.

How do they know it's time? Does the scent of the blooms call to them across vast distances, or is it a subtle interplay of moonlight? Whatever the cue, these unsung heroes of the night are essential to the desert's survival. We await their arrival with the same anticipation we feel for the return of the summer **Milky Way** — that breathtaking view of our home in our small corner of the **cosmos**.



Urania Public
Observatory

This connection between **Earth** and sky was at the heart of my recent trip to **Zurich** for **International Dark Sky Week**.

I attended a workshop on **Earth-space sustainability**, exploring the legal

frameworks needed to protect the sky and even the **Moon**. While the **Swiss** clouds were persistent most nights, a visit to the **Urania Public Observatory**, which has showcased the stars since 1907, offered a powerful perspective. Looking at the **Sun** through their telescope, I saw sunspots five times the size of Earth. It was a stark reminder that our "environment" does not end at our atmosphere; the Sun is a part of our neighborhood, and its light defines our days just as the stars should define our nights.



International DarkSky Week, Zurich, Switzerland

We are living through a pivot point in global consciousness. In 1968, the **Earth-rise** photo ignited the environmental movement. This year, the crew of **Artemis II** captured a stunning **Earthset**. This image must serve as more than a viral moment; it must elevate our collective awareness that the celestial environment requires the same protection we afford our oceans and forests.

Protecting the night, however, is not a solo flight. Just as bats rely on a network of blooming flora to survive their journeys, our mission relies on collaboration. This issue highlights our "**partners for the night**," the community stakeholders who turn cosmic perspective into local action. From the pollinators in our backyards to our advocates across the globe, we are all part of one continuous, dark-sky ecosystem.



For the night,
Ruskin Hartley
ruskin@darksky.org
Tucson, Arizona, U.S.

From the Editor



Starry skies over rural northern New Mexico, interrupted by the growing light dome of Albuquerque.

As we put this issue of *Nightscape* to bed, I write from my home state of **New Mexico**, in the southwest U.S., where I've been visiting loved ones. The night sky that I grew up under is threatened by light pollution from two cities, but I can still see the **Milky Way** from my sister's home near where I grew up, and it has given me comfort and rest after several busy months.



Megan (center) with DarkSky Missouri chapter board members Loring Bullard (left) and DeAnn Gregory (right).

Earlier this year, my travels took me to places like **Kansas City**, where I gave a presentation on dark skies for the **DarkSky Missouri chapter**, and to the **South Downs National Park** in the **U.K.**, where I joined celebrations marking the 10th anniversary of its designation as an **International Dark Sky Reserve**. Moving between different nightscapes and the communities that care for them has been a reminder of how varied and how fragile our shared experience of the night can be.

Across these places, one constant is the nocturnal life that depends on the night. Among the most

sensitive to its loss are **bats**, a huge and diverse group of species that rely on natural darkness to navigate, forage, and survive. **Artificial light** at night disrupts these patterns, altering feeding behaviors and fragmenting habitats that have existed for millennia.

In this issue, we turn our focus to bats and the growing body of research on how light pollution impacts them. You'll find a broad overview of **why darkness matters for these creatures**, with perspectives from **researchers, lighting designers, and conservationists** working to understand and mitigate the effects of light pollution.

Cake celebrating the 10th anniversary of South Downs National Park's designation as an International Dark Sky Reserve.



Many thanks to the friends, colleagues, advocates, and dark sky lovers all over the world who have supported the release of my book, *Nightfaring: In Search of the Disappearing Darkness*.

Finally, I'm thrilled to announce that I will be co-leading the first **"Dark Sky Conservation"** group tour to **Namibia** in **Feb-March 2027**. We will be visiting the **NamibRand International Dark Sky Reserve**, going on **nocturnal wildlife-watching drives**, sleeping in rooftop **stargazing beds**, spotting **desert-adapted elephants** and free-roaming **black rhino**, and taking in Namibia's incredible desert landscapes. And I'll be leading nightly stargazing and dark sky sessions. If you would like to join us, please visit terrafaunajourneys.com for more information.

Thank you, as always, for being part of this global community working to protect and restore the night.



Megan Eaves
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London, U.K.

Advocate highlights

News from DarkSky Advocates around the world



Worldwide

International Dark Sky Week 2026

was a big success with thousands of participants and more than 250 events worldwide. This year, a total of 96 proclamations and letters of support were issued, and the event reached nearly 2 million users on social media with more than 3,000 new followers. Altogether, IDSW reached around 20 million people through social media, global press coverage, and support from organizations like **Garmin**, **Under Canvas**, **Bat Conservation International**, and more.

Brazil



Anael de Souza

Astronomer and **Advocate Daniel Mello**, along with **Rafael Pereira** from the **Cachoeira do Cerradão Reserve** and the **Instituto AstroParques**, oversaw a full lighting update at the RPPN Cachoeira do Cerradão nature reserve, located in **Serra da Canastra National Park** in the state of **Minas Gerais**. The project included the replacement of 6500 K lights with 2200 and 1800 K dark sky-compliant lights throughout the reserve.

U.S.



Megan Eaves

Advocate Sarah McIntyre held the **Eyes in the Dark** astrophotography exhibition at the **Aurora Gallery** in **Albuquerque, New Mexico**. The exhibition featured images of the night sky by 25 local photographers. Advocates from the **DarkSky New Mexico chapter**, including **Derek Wallentinsen**, hosted an information booth on dark sky protection at the exhibition's opening reception.

Algeria

Advocate Susan Hunter was invited to a popular astronomy event in **Constantine, Algeria**, in April, where she met with

Algerian astronomers. Susan hosted a stall on dark sky protection, gave a presentation on the growing issue of light pollution in **North Africa**, and wrote an article on light pollution for the local **Echiheb Science Magazine**.






COVER STORY

Hummingbirds of the night

Nightscape Editor Megan Eaves explores how artificial light is reshaping the nocturnal world of bats and what dark sky conservation does to protect them.



A nectar-feeding endangered Mexican long-nosed bat (*Leptonycteris nivalis*) pollinates a night-blooming flower.

Credit: iStock*

A few years ago, during a trip to Kerala in southern India, I went swimming around sunset at the hotel pool along Vembanad Lake, a vast inland lagoon lined with coconut palms, mango trees, and tropical mangroves. As the sun went down, several huge bats came swooping overhead.

These were not the small brown bats I'd seen elsewhere; they were Indian flying foxes, a species of giant fruit bats whose wingspan can be up to 5 feet (1.5 m) — around the size of a small eagle. I was

mesmerized by their wings and adorable fox-like faces, for which they are named.

This dusk ritual happens nightly for most of the 1,500 bat species in the world. Many follow familiar routes from their caves, trees, or buildings to feeding areas along rivers, forest edges, ponds, and open fields. These routes are not random; they follow the availability of food, shelter, and, crucially, darkness. For bats, the night is a working environment needed for survival.

What bats do at night

Most bat species play a crucial role in keeping our environment functioning at night by eating large numbers of nocturnal flying insects, such as beetles and mosquitoes. Some bat species can eat up to half their body weight in insects — sometimes 3,000 or more in a single night — acting as natural pest control. According to a 2011 study by the University of Tennessee, these natural pest control services are worth around U.S. \$23 billion annually.

Other bats feed on nectar, pollinating plants that open or produce nectar at night. I spoke to Amanda Adams, Director of Research Coordination at Bat Conservation International, who told me that bats are the sole pollinators of agave plants.

“They are the hummingbirds of the night. We wouldn’t have tequila without bats!” she laughed, emphasizing that bats are also crucial for pest control on staple crops like rice and tomatoes.

Fruit bats contribute to seed dispersal across landscapes, supporting forest regeneration and plant diversity in tropical areas such as the Amazon. All of these processes happen in darkness. If the conditions of the night change or artificial light is added, these ecosystem services are disrupted.



INSECT CONTROL

Bats consume vast quantities of insects each night, reducing pests naturally.



POLLINATION

Nectar-feeding bats pollinate plants that bloom only at night, like agaves.



SEED DISPERSAL

Fruit bats carry seeds long distances, helping forests regenerate.



FOOD WEB

Bats are prey for many nocturnal animals and play a vital role to maintaining healthy dark ecosystems.

Credits: INSECT CONTROL: iStock, POLLINATION: Zdenek Machacek / unsplash, SEED DISPERSAL: iStock, FOOD WEB: iStock



A nectar-feeding endangered Mexican long-nosed bat (*Leptonycteris nivalis*) pollinates a night-blooming flower.

Credit: iStock

Where bats live and fly

Understanding how bats use the night comes from direct study. Adams told me that researchers use methods such as acoustic monitoring and banding to track bat movements and understand their routes and patterns. Acoustic detectors record their echolocation calls, allowing scientists to map where they are active, while banding involves placing a small, uniquely coded cuff on a bat's forearm. When that individual is recaptured or observed again,

researchers can identify where it has moved.

These methods show that bats use consistent routes between roosts and feeding areas. Some species travel long distances each night, while others rely on short, repeated circuits. In both cases, movement depends on access to uninterrupted dark routes. These studies prove that darkness functions as a habitat for bats — a necessary condition that shapes where they can move, feed, and reproduce.

When darkness is lost

Artificial light at night changes bat habitats in several ways. Many insects are drawn to light sources instead of being spread across the landscape. This concentrates food in specific locations and alters feeding patterns or makes food unavailable altogether.

According to Bats Without Borders, an organization working in southern Africa, bats' commuting routes can also be affected by changes in their habitat, including lighting that makes an area too bright to fly through. Bats flying through lit areas are also more visible to predators. Roads, buildings, and park lights can break up the dark routes bats use.

At a larger scale, high-intensity lighting can reshape their behavior entirely. Studies of stadium lighting, for example, have shown that strong, concentrated light sources can change where and how bats feed. This is one reason large-scale installations are a growing focus in lighting design. DarkSky's work on sports lighting addresses how facilities like stadiums can reduce light spill and limit ecological disruption while still meeting safety and visibility requirements.

Bats Without Borders is working to restore and protect biodiversity zones across southern Africa. Their "Habitat Connections" project is an urban conservation initiative in Lusaka, the capital city of Zambia. The project targets naturally darker areas, such as urban golf courses, which have no lighting or human activity at night, to create and restore bat habitats and flight corridors.



Urban coexistence

Research and practice show that cities can still support bat populations if lighting is designed carefully. In the U.K., guidance developed by the Institution of Lighting Professionals (ILP), in collaboration with the Bat Conservation Trust, sets out how artificial lighting should be assessed and managed in relation

“Residents on those estates know that [red] lighting is there because we have bats in the area, and they're proud of that.”

to bats. The guidance is to identify bat roosts and routes that connect them to feeding areas, and then apply a mitigation hierarchy.

Lighting consultant Stuart Morton, who co-authored the guidance, told me, “Bats are prevalent everywhere. You have common pipistrelles, and they’re common for a reason, because they [generally] thrive through change. They’re everywhere, and people should be considering them on every project.”

A key principle in the guidance is that lighting should only be used where it is needed.

“No lighting is the best solution,” Morton explained, adding that, where lighting is required, its design becomes critical, echoing what Amanda Adams from Bat Conservation International told me. Careful shielding, lower light levels, and warmer color temperatures (red is best) can reduce ecological impact. These approaches align closely with DarkSky’s Principles for Responsible Outdoor Lighting.

Urban design can also support bats by maintaining dark corridors that allow them to move through the landscape. Morton worked on a project in Worcestershire, England, which installed bat-sensitive lighting, showing how the guidance can be applied in practice. Bat-friendly red lighting was introduced, and some lighting was removed. Residents were informed about the purpose of the lighting. Morton said, “Residents on those estates know that [red] lighting is there because we have bats in the area, and they’re proud of that.”



CREATURE OF THE NIGHT

Spotted Bat (*Euderma maculatum*) — an uncommon species to find when biologists do bat capture surveys to collect guano. By collecting bat droppings, the researcher hopes to find out if pregnant or nursing female bats are choosing to eat more aquatic insects. These insects are rich in healthy fats that are important for the development of young bats. Since Grand Canyon National Park has the highest number of bat species of any national park, understanding their diets can help guide better decisions about how to protect these uniquely nocturnal mammals.



BATS WITHOUT BORDERS

Grand Canyon National Park is home to 22 species of bats — the highest diversity of any U.S. national park. Ongoing acoustic monitoring with 13 recorders shows some species remain active even in winter, foraging at the canyon bottom where insects persist. This year-round activity may help reduce the impact of white-nose syndrome, a deadly fungal disease spreading in the Southwest. No cases have been confirmed in Grand Canyon bats to date. Most bats here roost alone or in small groups in canyon wall crevices, helping limit disease spread while continuing to play vital roles as pollinators, insect predators, and prey.

Credit: Lauren Cisneros

Protecting the night for bats

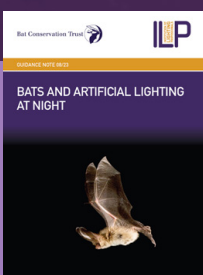
Protecting bats requires changing how light is used. Reducing or switching off lighting when it is not needed is the best choice. If it is needed, Adams says light should be red or warm-toned, kept as dim as possible, put on timers or motion sensors, and directed downward to avoid spill into flight routes. Maintaining existing dark routes between the bats' roosts and feeding areas is critical, particularly along rivers, hedgerows, and woodland edges.

When bats leave their roosts at dusk and follow their repeated routes, they depend on darkness as much as food or shelter. Artificial light disrupts how bats use the environment, which in turn can have a domino effect across the environment. As Adams reminded me, "Bats are integral to healthy ecosystems, which are also important for healthy humans. We need all three to be healthy to be able to thrive." ✦



An Indian Flying Fox fruit bat emerges at dusk.

Credit: Vikram Nair, Unsplash



ADDITIONAL READING

Download the **Institute of Lighting Professionals'** guidance note **GN08**, *Bats and Artificial Lighting*, co-authored by Stuart Morton. bit.ly/ILPbats



International Dark Sky Places program



Credit: iStock

Bat caves

Caves are crucial bat habitats. Many species use caves as roosting and breeding sites, often returning to the same locations over long periods. Stable temperatures and moisture, and low light levels support bat reproduction and survival. Artificial light near caves can alter bat behavior or cause them to abandon it altogether.

While bats are present in most places around the world, at right are a few certified **International Dark Sky Places** that are home to **caves** with bat populations.

- ◆ **Oregon Caves National Monument and Preserve**
Oregon, U.S.
- ◆ **Sinks Canyon State Park**
Wyoming, U.S.
- ◆ **Mammoth Cave National Park**
Kentucky, U.S.
- ◆ **Timpanogos Cave National Monument**
Utah, U.S.
- ◆ **Kartchner Caverns State Park**
Arizona, U.S.
- ◆ **Great Basin National Park**
Nevada, U.S.
- ◆ **Cévennes National Park**
France
- ◆ **Yorkshire Dales National Park**
England, U.K.
- ◆ **Bannau Brycheiniog (Brecon Beacons)**
Wales, U.K.

Find out more: darksky.org/places

DARKSKY ACTION FUND

PROTECT
THE NIGHT
^
DARKSKY
CONSERVATION

Providing a direct line to dark sky conservation worldwide

The DarkSky Action Fund supports dark sky conservation projects around the world, from safeguarding critical nocturnal habitat through our global network of International Dark Sky Places to advancing targeted initiatives that reduce light pollution in sensitive wildlife zones.

These efforts enable important work on the ground and in the sky, from bat and bird surveys to lighting programs that protect hatchling sea turtles and other species that depend on the night.

The DarkSky Action Fund is your direct line to supporting real projects and real solutions.



Take action today.

Support dark sky conservation.
secure.darksky.org/a/action-fund



Photo credit: Grand Canyon Conservancy

A wildlife biologist at Grand Canyon National Park delicately holds a bat during a research survey. In a landscape where researchers estimate there may be more than 2,500 caves, this International Dark Sky Park protects critical nighttime habitat in one of the most bat-diverse regions in the United States.

Photo credit: Bettymaya Foott

COLLABORATING FOR A DARKER FUTURE

Community Partnerships for the night



Credit: Unsplash, Icons: FlatIcon.com

Stronger together

DarkSky's work has always depended on collaboration. The problem of light pollution sits at the intersection of lighting design, ecology, biodiversity, public health, urban planning, climate change, and social justice. No single organization holds all of that expertise. This is where community partners come in.

A community partner is an organization that works alongside DarkSky in a shared area of interest. These partners are typically non-profits, research groups, or other advocacy organizations whose work overlaps with light pollution in a specific way. Some focus on wildlife conservation, others on human health, energy use, or urban



ECOLOGY



WILDLIFE



PUBLIC HEALTH



URBAN PLANNING



ENERGY



SOCIAL JUSTICE

planning. Each brings its own knowledge and audience.

Rather than operating as strictly formal agreements, the community partner model is designed to be flexible. It recognizes that organizations approach the issue of light at night from different angles, and that all of those perspectives are useful. The goal is to create a network through which information, research, and practical solutions can move easily between researchers and advocates.

This approach also requires a broader shift in how we understand light pollution. We know now that artificial light at night is not just an astronomical issue. It is increasingly recognized as an environmental and public health concern, with impacts that cut across sectors. For DarkSky, working with organizations already active in those sectors allows the conversation to reach beyond our traditional audience.

Sarah Martin, DarkSky's Chief Development Officer, says partner organizations often have access to rich and detailed data and local knowledge that can aid in DarkSky's mission to protect the night. "For example, a bat conservation group, such as our community partner Bat Conservation International, may be tracking how specific species respond to changes in lighting,"

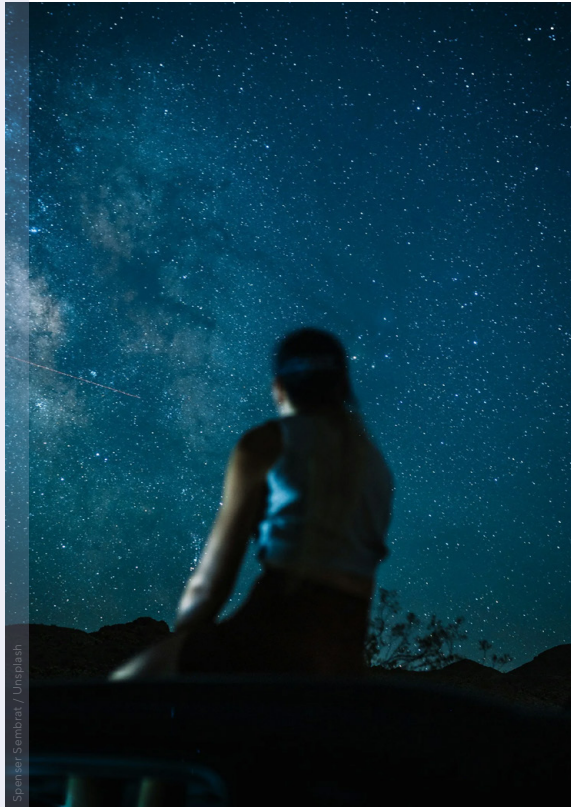


Artificial light at night is not just an astronomical issue.

IT IS INCREASINGLY RECOGNIZED AS AN ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH CONCERN, WITH IMPACTS THAT CUT ACROSS SECTORS.

she says. Similarly, a public health organization might be studying links between light exposure and sleep, and an urban planning group may be working on how lighting is specified and installed in cities.

"By connecting these efforts, community partners help us build a more complete picture of how light affects both people and ecosystems," Martin says. They also make it easier to translate research



Spencer Sambaat / Unsplash

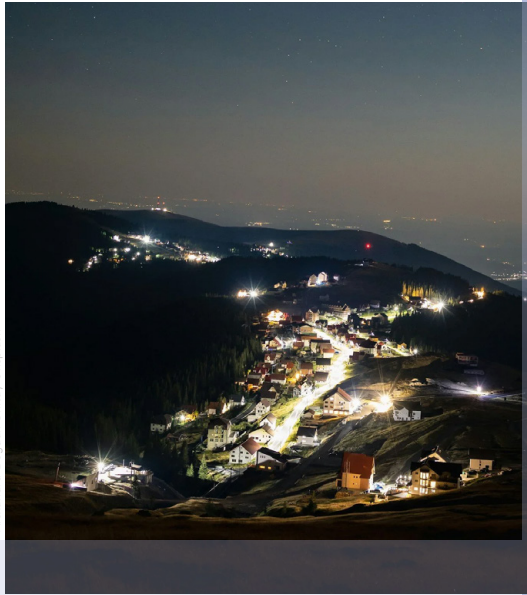
into action, for example, through guidance on lighting design, which is stronger when it is informed by ecological data and tested in real-world projects.

Amplifying impact

This is also reflected in DarkSky's strategic plan, which places greater emphasis on partnerships and cross-sector collaboration. Expanding our network of community partners is one way to scale impact efficiently without duplicating work. Instead of building brand new programs in every area, DarkSky can support and amplify work that is already happening with our partners.

Collaboration with other organizations is critical to ensuring success across all DarkSky programs. This is built into DarkSky's Strategic Plan as a mission to integrate DarkSky principles and approaches into global conservation themes via partnerships with other organizations. Through collaboration, we ensure that we are accurately describing the essential interests of these important groups, which leads to higher levels of credibility and consensus. Furthermore, collaborating makes our case stronger for pursuing policies to reduce light pollution.

The model also works in the other direction. Partner organizations benefit from access to DarkSky's expertise in lighting and our global



Alexandru-Bondan Ghita / Unsplash

“ By connecting these efforts, community partners help us build a more complete picture of how light affects both people and ecosystems.

SARAH MARTIN, Chief Development Officer, DarkSky

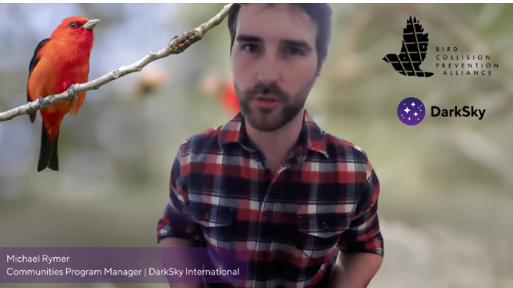
platform. For groups focused on specific issues like bats, sea turtles, or insects, light pollution may be one of several pressures. Working with DarkSky provides a way to integrate lighting into their work without needing to develop that expertise independently. For example, DarkSky has partnered with the Bird Collision Prevention Alliance for several years, and in October 2025, Dark Sky's Community Program Manager, Michael Rymer, was invited to give the keynote address at their annual Bird Collision Summit. He spoke about what DarkSky does and

why light pollution is crucial for birds, the financial and energetic cost of artificial light, the creative and inspirational loss of seeing the night sky, the negative impact on human wellbeing and sleep cycles, and the negative impact on creatures other than humans. A prime example of how DarkSky can bring the message of light pollution to new audiences through these community partnerships.

There are also communication benefits. For one, light pollution can be a technical subject, and community partners help translate the technicalities for their audiences, bringing new people into the dark sky movement. Likewise, community partners can serve as valuable collaborative voices when urgent issues arise. A recent example of such a collaboration saw DarkSky partner with Environment America and the American Bird Conservancy to co-sign an open letter to Reflect Orbital and its investors, urging them to reassess their plans to place mirrors

into low-Earth orbit to reflect sunlight to the ground at night.

The effects of artificial light at night are complex, and solutions often involve trade-offs between different needs. Working across organizations allows those compromises to be addressed more directly with input from multiple perspectives. For DarkSky, the aim is not to lead every conversation, but to support a broader network that can respond to the issue from many directions. Community partners are central to that approach. ✦



Michael Rymer, Dark Sky Communities Program Manager, giving a presentation about light pollution for our community partner, Bird Collision Alliance.



DarkSky
A NETWORK OF PARTNERS

Learn about these and many more community partners working toward a healthier planet for people and wildlife at darksky.org/who-we-are/partners/





Newly certified International Dark Sky Places and Lodgings

Announced since February 1, 2026



269

International Dark Sky Places around the world

40

Countries and territories represented

6

Continents represented

255,460+

Square kilometers of protected land and night sky

Dedham Vale National Landscape Dark Sites campaign



DARK SKY COMMUNITY

Thorington Street

Suffolk, U.K.

3.5 km²

A hamlet of 40 cottages along a single lane, where residents co-developed a lighting design guide and a DarkSky Approved exterior fixture now used across the surrounding countryside.

Ann Driggers



DARK SKY COMMUNITY

Old Snowmass

Colorado, U.S.

2.6 km²

Small rural community of ranches, homes, and agricultural land, where residents maintain responsible lighting alongside open pasture, wildlife corridors, and habitats for elk and migratory birds.

Marina Kahrmann



DARK SKY PARK

Nossentiner/Schwinzer Heide Nature Park

Germany

355 km²

Extensive protected landscape of forests, heath, and more than 60 lakes, where low population density supports dark skies and nocturnal experiences like owl walks and moonlight paddling.

Winton Dark Sky Community

4



DARK SKY COMMUNITY

Winton

Queensland, Australia

53,814 km²

Outback town known for dinosaur fossils and nearby Australian Age of Dinosaurs sites, with community-led lighting upgrades supporting astrotourism, education, and clear, star-filled skies.

Andreas Hollinger Buchstein

5



DARK SKY RESERVE

Eisenwurzen

Austria

2,498 km²

Reserve encompassing 20 municipalities set among limestone cliffs and deep gorges. Hosts some of the oldest living trees in the Alps and one of Central Europe's most intact nocturnal landscapes.

Anna Molzahn

6



DARK SKY COMMUNITY

Stärepark Pëtschent – Putscheid

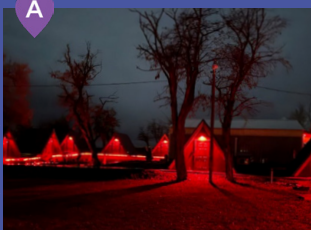
Luxembourg

27 km²

Sandwiched between Belgium and Germany, Luxembourg's first Dark Sky Community has fully shielded, smart adaptive, 2200 K public lighting that is switched off overnight.

Antelope Basecamp

A



DARK SKY LODGING

Antelope Basecamp

Oregon, U.S.

Located in Antelope Dark Sky Community, this desert lodge offers minimalist, red-lit cabins, onsite telescopes, night sky events, and a library of dark sky books.

Under Canvas

B



DARK SKY LODGING

Under Canvas Yosemite

California, U.S.

California's first DarkSky-certified Lodging, this glamping resort is located in the forests of the Sierra Nevada Mountains next to Yosemite National Park.

César Guerrero Ávila

C



DARK SKY LODGING

Rancho La Concepción

Baja California, México

This regenerative ranch is located near the Sierra de San Pedro Mártir National Park and hosts star parties, night gatherings, owl walks, and astrophotography workshops.

Au Diable Vert

D



DARK SKY LODGING

Au Diable Vert

Quebec, Canada

Mountain lodging on a plateau above Mont Sutton, with pod cabins, treehouses, and forest campsites, plus an augmented-reality outdoor planetarium in a mountainside amphitheater.

News & notables

News from the global movement promoting responsible outdoor light at night

Chile's dark skies saved as industrial project abandoned

Energy company **AES Andes** has withdrawn its US\$10 billion proposal to build a large-scale industrial facility and hydrogen energy plant adjacent to the **ESO's Paranal Observatory** in northern Chile. This follows outspoken concern from the **International Dark Sky and astronomy communities**, who feared light pollution from the facility would threaten important science and dark skies in the region.

New SpaceX satellite proposal threatens the night sky



Joe Nidd

DarkSky has issued an open letter opposing a new proposal by **SpaceX** that seeks approval to launch up to a million satellites into low Earth orbit. The proposal would create a network of orbital data centers supporting artificial intelligence infrastructure. Sign the letter: darksky.org/open-letter-to-spacex

Support the DarkSky Action Fund



The DarkSky Action Fund fuels projects that advance dark sky conservation, protecting nocturnal habitat and reducing light pollution in critical wildlife areas. Your gift is a direct investment in protecting the night.

bit.ly/ds-actionfund



DarkSky

Submit your photos to the Capture the Dark contest

DarkSky proudly announces the 2026 edition of **Capture the Dark**, the premier nightscape and astrophotography contest. Submissions are open from **May 1 to June 30**, and winners will be announced in August. Winners may be featured in the September issue of **Nightscape**. Visit DarkSky's website for details and to submit your photos. capturethedark.darksky.org



Embrace the night with DarkSky merchandise

Looking for something fun or wearable to show your appreciation for the night? Check out our DarkSky-themed apparel and designs, including hats, totes, and more.

darksky.org/shop



Stephen Hummel

New U.S. border wall plans threaten dark skies

Earlier this year, the **U.S. federal government** announced plans to install a 30-foot-high border wall and **high intensity stadium lighting** along hundreds of miles of the **southwestern border**. The wall would sever millions of acres of wild back country in the ecologically sensitive and pristine protected lands of **Big Bend**, one of the largest protected dark sky regions in the **United States**. Read more about DarkSky's position:

bit.ly/darkskybigbend



Oshin Zakarian

Babak Tafreshi named a National Geographic Explorer at Large

Dark Sky Advocate and photographer **Babak Tafreshi** has been named an "Explorer at Large" by **National Geographic**. This is one of the highest honors awarded by the **National Geographic Society**, recognizing a global leader who not only advances exploration and storytelling but also serves as an ambassador and mentor to strengthen and elevate the broader Explorer community.

Check out DarkSky's list of recommended books



DarkSky has compiled a list of books that recount the stories, science, and beauty that belong to the night. From stargazing and nocturnal wildlife to cultural history, sleep, and the emotional landscapes of after-dark hours, each one explores a different facet of life beyond sunset. Check out the list:

bit.ly/darkskyreads



Smithsonian Institution

Smithsonian Lights Out exhibit extended

The **Lights Out** exhibit at the **National Museum of Natural History** in **Washington, D.C.**, was previously set to end in December 2025 but has been extended through December 2026. With more than 100 photographs, interactive experiences, tactile models, and a theater program, it beautifully shows why dark nights matter.

naturalhistory.si.edu/lights-out

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT

DarkSky and **Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility (PEER)** have released a joint letter to the **U.S. FCC Secretary** calling for a formal environmental review of proposed **orbital illumination systems** that would reflect sunlight to **Earth** at night. The filing urges the **Federal Communications Commission** to study the environmental impacts before approving the launch of prototype satellites. darksky.org/orbital

「 Capture the Dark 」

The global stage for photography at night

DarkSky International proudly presents Capture the Dark—the premier global photography contest celebrating the wonders of the night and what's at risk of being lost to light pollution.

We invite photographers of all skill levels to participate and share their unique perspectives.



Learn more!
capturethedark.darksky.org

Photo credit: Hao-han Sun



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