

International Dark Sky Week celebrates natural night skies all year round

By NEEL ROBERTS

The heat is on; or should I say the light is off? No matter where in the world you live pressure is mounting to preserve "natural dark skies" like the pre-industrial age of the 1800s. If you look at the light pollution map https://www.cleardarksky.com/maps/lp/large_light_pollution_map.html the good news is most of the world still has a "organic" dark sky whereas there's no artificial lighting to speak of. The oceans are the best examples which cover over 70% of the Earth. Most of Africa, Australia, Greenland, and all of Antarctica are land examples whether habitable or not. The bad news is the highly populated areas have lost the bulk of their evening sky like most of Europe, India, and the Eastern United States. So well under 10% is a missed cause mainly because of poor artificial lighting regulations.

The International Dark-Sky Association based in Tucson, Arizona <https://www.darksky.org> has a mission since 1988 to lead a movement to protect the night from light pollution. If you check out their website, they've made significant strides. With over 1,000 dark sky certified lighting fixtures, 170 designated dark sky areas consisting of over 110,000 kms and with over 500 volunteer activists in over 49 countries, they're making a difference. One of the

best documentaries I've seen on the affects of artificial lighting is the 2011 "The City Dark" made by PBS <https://www.pbs.org/pov/watch/citydark/>. The last week of April 22nd to 30th is "International Dark Sky Week" <https://idsw.darksky.org> dedicated to raising awareness about the movement. Many observatories that opened near cities in the last century have been encroached by the growing urban illumination due to lack of preventative measures. While it's never too late to reverse course, usually decision makers are apathetic. Bon Accord, Alberta just outside of Edmonton is a great example of pro-active leadership <https://www.darksky.org/our-work/conservation/idsp/communities/bon-accord-canada/>. "The town wants to permanently affirm its commitment to preserving the night sky for generations of children and stargazers to come" according to officials, so if they can do it, what's stopping you? Us People are the Power. "The Best Is Yet To Come!"

Sky watch for the next month: Download this month's sky free chart at <http://whatsouttonight.com/Resources/Resources/2022AprWOTSkyChart.pdf>

1. Jupiter & Venues pre-dawn Conjunction- On Saturday April 30th look East at 05:00 am as this duo rises into the morning.

2. Mercury & M45 at dusk- On Friday April 29th look NW after dusk and watch this pair set into the night.

3. Moon & 4 Planets before dawn- On Saturday April 23rd look SE at 04:00 am as the quarter Moon pulls up Saturn, Mars, Venus, and Jupiter into the morning.

4. Lyrids Meteor Shower- also known as April shooting stars produced by dust particles left behind by comet C/1861 G1 Thatcher discovered in 1861 will peak dusk Friday April 22nd. Look NNE into the constellation of Lyra near Vega and you should be able to catch 10-20 meteors per hour on average with rare surges of up to 100 after the Moon sets around 5:00 am <https://www.timeanddate.com/astronomy/meteor-shower/lyrids.html>.

Happy Easter and Warmer Days!

Neel Roberts is a local astronomer in Southern Alberta and welcomes your comments at Neel_Roberts@ptccanada.com, Tel: (403) 560-6574. Check out his work at www.ptccanada.com.

