

Losing the Dark

Have you checked out the night sky lately? On a clear night a hundred years ago, the Milky Way appeared bright enough that it cast several different shadows from sunset to sunrise. Nowadays, we are lucky to notice it at all!

Anthropogenic light pollution—light pollution caused by human activity—**has upset the sleep-wake cycles** of many land animals including us and has obscured the celestial objects which migratory species use as beacons.



The Milky Way [Noah Silliman](#),

When considering our impacts on the environment, it's all too common to forget about light pollution.

In rural areas, where many leave lights on through the night for security, it's important to think about how we are affecting the organisms around us—many of whom make their living after we go to bed.

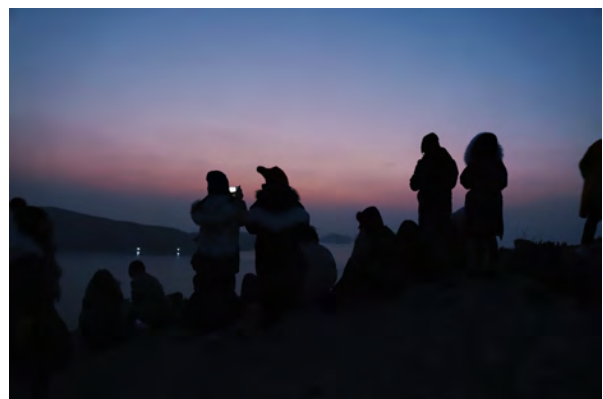
Installing lights strategically can be as simple as providing shades and using existing foliage to block or diffuse direct light. **Directing lights towards the ground** is a foolproof way to prevent light from spreading vertically and horizontally from your property.

The **wavelength** also makes a big difference. Warmer colours like yellow and red mimic a sunrise or sunset-type environment, as opposed to the blue-white glow of many newer LED bulbs. It's just as confusing for us as it is for the animals around us, when our senses think it is noon at midnight!

The [Bortle Dark-Sky Scale](#) has been used commonly since the turn of the twenty-first century to gauge the local effects of light pollution. The numerical scale goes from 1 to 9, with 9 describing inner-city light conditions.

To find a Class 1, or “excellent” dark-sky location, nowadays requires very specific planning, and is, unfortunately, something that most of us will never witness. In most of rural Mountain View County, Class 4 night skies are usually as good as it gets.

There are [5 Dark Sky Preserves in Alberta](#). [Alberta Parks Dark Sky Guide](#).



Night Sky [Raychan](#)

[Alberta Wow](#) features an extensive list of campgrounds and hiking trails in the province, and includes a rating on the Bortle scale for most locations! (Look under FAQs for *Night Sky Darkness*.)

For more information and visual on the effects of light pollution visit the [International Dark Sky Organization](#).

*Jordan Collin
Legacy Land Trust*