



Capture the Dark

DarkSky's premiere nighttime
photography competition



CAPTURE THE DARK 2025



DarkSky

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Cover photo credit: Jack Fusco

Photo credit: Bin Chen

The global stage for photography at night

Photography has the power to transform, and in the dark sky movement, it's a force for change. A single image of a star-filled sky or a field aglow with fireflies can transport viewers and reveal the magic of the night.

DarkSky International, in partnership with our event sponsors, proudly presents Capture the Dark 2025—the premier global photography contest to celebrate the night and build awareness about what is being lost with the growth of light pollution.

We invite photographers of all skill levels to participate and showcase unique perspectives, helping to illustrate the need to protect the night.

Entries open

May 1–June 30, 2025

Voting open

July 1–July 21, 2025

Awards

August (TBD)

Contest categories

Whether you're a professional astrophotographer or someone just beginning to capture the beauty of the night with a cell phone, this contest is for everyone. Each category invites you to share your unique perspective, helping to showcase why protecting the night matters.

EXPLORE CATEGORIES



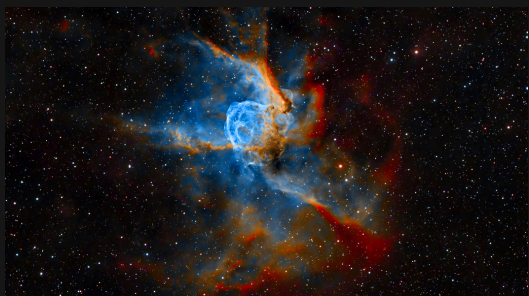
Capture the Dark



Dark Sky Friendly Lighting and Design



Creatures of the Night (flora & fauna)



Deep Sky Observations



The Impact of Light Pollution



International Dark Sky Places



Mobile Nighttime Photography



Young Astrophotographers



Peoples Choice Award

Something for Everyone!

With a range of categories designed for all skill levels and styles, we welcome everyone to participate.

For the professionals

Are you an experienced photographer who specializes in nightscapes, astrophotography, or long exposures? Capture the Dark provides a global stage for your photography to be viewed and appreciated, linking your work to a growing worldwide movement.

For DarkSky supporters and advocates

You don't need to be a professional photographer to make an impact. While we welcome entries in every category, we're especially excited to see photos that highlight examples of good—or bad—lighting.

And if you're shooting with a phone, we've got you covered! Our Mobile Nighttime Photography category is designed just the every day (or every night) explorer.

For youth photographers

Are you an up-and-coming astrophotographer or nighttime explorer? Our Youth Astrophotography category welcomes photographers 17 or younger to enter a special category—it's a great opportunity to showcase your work, learn about the importance of dark skies, and grow your skills as the next great photographer.

Credit: Zubayer Kaolin





Credit : Royce Bair

Contest rules

Before you submit your work, take a moment to review the rules. These guidelines are here to ensure a fair, respectful, and inspiring experience for everyone.

We also want to ensure that submissions reflect DarkSky's values. This year's contest is guided by a new set of principles (page 6) that encourage photographers to capture the night responsibly—my minimizing the addition of light to the landscape or disturbing the natural and cultural environment.

CONTEST RULES

How to enter the contest

Submitting your work is free and simple. Entries open May 1 and will be accepted through June 30—join us in celebrating and protecting the night!

Note: Contestants may submit three photos per category.

1. Visit the [Capture the Dark](#) site.
2. Click 'Enter Now' on the homepage.
3. Create an account
4. Fill out all required information
 - a. Camera make and model
 - b. Camera settings
 - c. Location
 - d. Descriptions and captions
5. Submit!

ENTER NOW



Credit : Bettymaya Foott

DarkSky's Principles for Responsible Astrophotography

1. Use light responsibly

Protect the nighttime environment and the experience of others by limiting the addition of artificial light in nighttime photographs.

2. Promote honest representation

Capture an authentic experience of the night sky by being transparent about the editing process, labeling composite images, and ensuring the night sky aligns with the geographic location of the foreground.

3. Respect dark sky locations

Follow Leave No Trace principles to protect sensitive areas, and abide by local laws and regulations when visiting parks, reserves, and communities. Travel mindfully to minimize impact.

4. Practice responsible astrotourism

Astrophotographers are an integral part of astrotourism. Follow [DarkSky's Principles of Responsible Astrotourism](#) to support the sustainable growth of this industry.

5. Manage expectations

Astrophotography is both a scientific and artistic pursuit. Raising awareness of the differences between what a camera captures and what the human eye perceives can help set realistic expectations, especially for people experiencing dark skies for the first time.

6. Share your passion

Many people only experience dark skies through photographs. Use your work to inspire others and build awareness of the importance of protecting the night.

Promotional materials

Want to help elevate the beauty of the night sky and support photographers from around the world? You can make a big impact by sharing your excitement for the Capture the Dark contest on social media and beyond!

Whether you're submitting a photo, casting a vote, or simply love what the contest, we've created a set of easy-to-share graphics and logos to help you show your support.

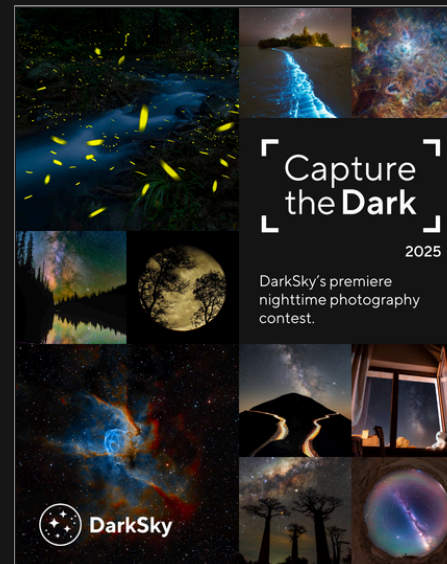
How You Can Help:

1. Download your favorite graphic
2. Post it on your preferred social media platforms (Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn, Bluesky—wherever you're active)
3. Tag us using @darksky_intl and use the hashtag #CaptureTheDark so we can amplify your post!
4. Encourage your friends and followers to join in, whether by submitting, voting, or sharing

Your voice helps us celebrate the beauty of the night and the importance of protecting it. Thank you for being part of our growing global community!

OUTREACH MATERIALS

CAPTURE THE DARK LOGOS



Capture the Dark merchandise

Show your love for the night by representing the contest! Capture the Dark merchandise is now available! Every purchase directly supports our mission and our vital programs to protect natural darkness worldwide.

It's a great way to celebrate your passion for the night sky and start conversations. Check out the collection and help keep the stars shining bright!

[SHOP CAPTURE THE DARK](#)



Photography as advocacy

Astrophotography reveals what we stand to lose—and what we can still protect. Whether capturing the Milky Way, city skyglow, or disappearing nocturnal habitat, your images open eyes. Share your work and tell the full story.

Let's use this contest to showcase the beauty of natural darkness, but don't hold back from sharing the challenges. A photo streaked with satellite trails or dulled by light pollution speaks volumes. Let our audience see both the inspirational and alarming.

Use photography to spark conversations

The Capture the Dark contest isn't just about showcasing images—it's an opportunity to engage with others. Share your photos with neighbors, local groups, or online communities and invite questions like, "Do you know how far your porch light reaches?" or "When was the last time you saw the Milky Way?" These moments of curiosity build awareness.

Point people toward solutions

When conversations turn to action, recommend [DarkSky Approved](#) lighting fixtures and the [Five Principles of Responsible Outdoor Lighting](#), designed to reduce glare and restore natural darkness.

Support change in your community

If you're connected with local leaders, partners, or organizations, share [DarkSky's model lighting ordinance](#). Help decision-makers see that better lighting benefits everyone, from stargazers to wildlife. Partner with a local DarkSky chapter if there's one nearby, or be the voice that starts the conversation.

Why your voice matters

Photography connects people emotionally to the night. When you combine that with practical steps and shared stories, you turn inspiration into action. The stars need advocates, and your lens is one of our strongest tools.



Learn more

Please don't hesitate to reach out
with any questions.

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