

Book Review

by Nalayini Davies, 26 September 2016

Fighting Light Pollution: Smart Lighting Solutions for Individuals and Communities

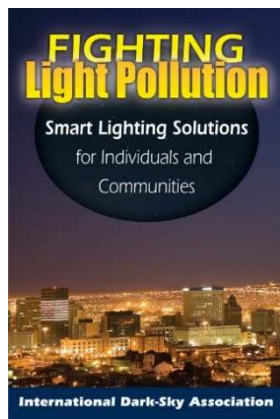
International Dark-Sky Association

2012

Stackpole Books, Pennsylvania, USA

169 pages, ISBN: 978-0-8117-3637-4

US\$17.99 for paperback from Amazon



This book has been put together by the International Dark-Sky Association (IDA) which was founded 28 years ago to work on reducing light pollution. It is a resource aimed at individuals and communities interested in practical solutions to preserve the night sky. Although this is not an exciting or awe inspiring topic like so many in astronomy, it is certainly one that we as astronomers and members of the community should know much more about. Having a greater than average stake in the conservation of dark skies, astronomers are at the forefront of the 'dark sky movement' that has been gathering momentum in recent years. This book claims that *"excess artificial light is not only one of the most controllable pollutants facing the world today, it is also one of the easiest for an individual to address"*. This suggests that we can all play our part as individuals in minimising light pollution through managing the directionality and controllability of lighting, the use of timers/dimmers/sensors and minimising blue spectrum emissions etc.

Since the electric light was created about 125 years ago, our environment has progressively altered to the extent where more than 80% of the world and more than 99% of the US and Europeans live under light-polluted skies. Warning that *"this degradation is leading to irredeemable loss of an extensive association with cultural, scientific, scenic and natural heritage"*, the book advocates ideas for the identification, protection and preservation of the darks skies around us so that they can be experienced and appreciated by future generations.

Light pollution is defined as *"excessive and inappropriate artificial light at night"*. It worryingly states that *"light pollution is growing at a rate of 6% each year"*. The basic message of the book with respect to lighting is very simple: *"Light where needed, when needed and for the minimum time necessary"*. It then moves to discuss the reason for and options to improve sky quality – an endeavour that requires community participation for success. In short, preserving our dark skies requires each one of us to participate either by managing our own lighting decisions in a dark sky friendly manner and/or as dark sky enthusiast/advocate/activist.

Each of the chapters elaborates on a different sub-topic: light pollution; effect on the human eye (e.g. impact on dark adaptation); effects on human health and on wildlife (e.g. impact on the circadian rhythms); home-owners' guide to landscape lighting (e.g. details on fixture choices); crime prevention and safety lighting (e.g. strategies to better achieve this with less light pollution); various sub-topics on working with commercial; industrial and public lighting issues; and on night sky conservation and the creating International Dark Sky Places.

Although this book addresses all the related sub-topics of what is a multifaceted topic, its coverage is relatively light (no pun intended). Further, it very much focuses on communicating facts and workable solutions, making it more a practical resource than an enjoyable read. That said, it remains a useful introduction to the topic providing a good overview, especially for someone new to the subject. The book is a quick and easy read and can be delved into selectively choosing only those sub-topics that are of particular interest. It has had an immediate impact, with my resulting increased awareness of light pollution leading to simple but effective changes being implemented in my home as well as my evolution from dark sky enthusiast to dark sky advocate!