



## Did You Know? Cabin Lights for Dark Starry Skies

By Stephen Wilbers



We may have differing notions of what looks good and what doesn't, but there's one thing we can all agree on: we love the natural beauty and recreational opportunities afforded by our gorgeous Eau Claire Lakes area. And one of the many things that makes our area so beautiful is its dark starry nights and views of breathtaking northern lights.

Increasingly, however, our ability to enjoy celestial beauty is threatened by light pollution. As I wrote in [FOECLA's Spring 2023 Newsletter](#), there are four types:

- **Glare** pollution shines directly into your eye and makes it hard for you to see.
- **Light trespass** shines from your building onto your neighbor's house or property.

- **Skylight** brightens the sky over towns and cities.
- **Clutter** is just what it sounds like – a bunch of “bright, confusing, and excessive groupings of light sources.”

Of particular concern for cabin, woodland, and lake homeowners are **glare** and **light trespass**.

How about the lighting on your property? For a quick assessment, consider this simple illustration:



And how about your neighbors’ lighting? Whether next door or across the lake, are their lights interfering with your view of the night sky?

If you’re less than enamored with their lighting choices, here are four simple tips from [Dark Sky International](#) on how to talk with your neighbors respectfully and productively about a potentially delicate topic:

- Make friends, not enemies.
- Stay positive and don’t argue.
- Suggest alternatives to their current fixture.
- Be informative.

For more tips and information visit Dark Sky International's [My Neighbor's Lighting](#) page.

And what about color temperature?

Did you know that color temperature (or CT) is measured on the Kelvin scale according to the spectral amount of red, yellow, green, and blue light from a light source? The higher the red and yellow content, the warmer and more relaxing the light. The higher the blue content, the whiter and more glaring the light.

For example, warm candlelight and relaxing campfire light are around CT 1800K on the Kelvin scale. The old incandescent lights you may have grown up with were around 2200K. By contrast, many home security lights and LED street

lights are measured at CT 4000 or 5000K, a level containing a high concentration of short-wavelength blue light. In 2016, the American Medical Association declared light in this range unhealthy because it interferes with your circadian rhythm and at very high levels can even damage your retina.

In short, the warmer the light, the easier it is on your eyes and your health. And the less of it there is, the better you can see the night sky. Unshielded, glaring, blue white lights not only interfere with your ability to see the stars, but they also confuse migrating birds.

Now for some good news. There's a growing awareness about the importance of preserving our dark skies around the globe, and Wisconsin is on the move in protecting and promoting its starry nights.

Wisconsin is home to one of 18 designated Dark Sky Parks in the U.S.: [Newport State Park](#) at the far end of the Door Peninsula. In addition, there are ongoing dark sky initiatives in the Apostle Islands, the Kickapoo Valley / Wildcat State Park, and Copper Falls State Park. (Who knows, maybe the Eau Claire Lakes area will be next?)

Furthermore, both individual cabin owners and businesses can now apply to be certified as dark sky friendly, a designation that is good not only for neighbors and towns, but also for the bottom line. Increasingly, visitors and tourists are seeking destinations based on their dark skies such as Newport State Park, the North Shore of Lake Superior, and the Boundary Waters Canoe Area.

If you would like to learn more, please join me for a 15-minute Zoom presentation, followed by a 15-minute Q & A, with a fascinating speaker, at a time that works for you and whoever else wants to join us.

The speaker is Minnesota's [Starry Skies North](#) President Todd Burlet, who is leading the charge to establish DarkSky Wisconsin. (Next in his sights is an Iowa chapter.) Todd will answer your questions about a host of topics, from purchasing recommended light fixtures to certifying your cabin or business as dark sky friendly and getting involved with DarkSky Wisconsin. I won't call Todd a walking encyclopedia because he's a lot more fun than that. (Besides, I've never actually seen an encyclopedia walk.)

When I asked Todd how many participants it would take to make a Zoom meeting worth his time, he said one (not counting me). So send me a note at [wilbe004@umn.edu](mailto:wilbe004@umn.edu) and we'll figure out a time when most people can meet.

If learning from a fascinating, friendly, non-confrontational expert like Todd requires more bandwidth than you can spare, I invite you to watch the 56-minute PBS/Hamline University documentary called [Northern Nights, Starry Skies](#).

This "visually stunning exploration of the heavens" opens with breathtaking videos of aurora storms. It's narrated by Ojibwe photographer Travis Novitsky, co-author of the beautiful book *Spirits Dancing*, as well as by Hamline Professor and author Paul Bogard, the lovable "Astro" Bob King, Starry Skies North founders Cynthia Lapp and Randy Larson, and revered bird expert Laura Erickson.

I call this amazing documentary a "conversion" piece because it converts non-

believers into believers regarding the importance of preserving our dark starry skies. After watching it, the CEO of Duluth's Essentia hospital building, whose bright lights were illuminating not only the Duluth skyline but a huge swath of Lake Superior, agreed to meet with a Starry Skies North volunteer.

Sure, he told her, we can lower our window shades at night. No problem.



Essentia hospital building in Duluth, before and after light pollution mitigation.

Despite all this good news, as measured by satellites, our planet's skyglow continues to increase 10% annually, so there's plenty of work still to be done.

Please give some thought to how you're lighting your buildings or steps or path to your dock. How much light are you unintentionally projecting into your neighbors' eyes, whether next door or across the lake?

Share your good looks and personality and favorite recipes with your neighbor – not your glaring lights. Believe me, your light-sensitive neighbors, along with our migrating avian relatives, will thank you.

## More on Dark Skies

**Online**, search:

- "My neighbor's lighting," for tips on how to talk with your neighbor
- "Dark sky approved lighting," for fixtures recommended by DarkSky International
- "Newport State Park," Wisconsin's first (and only) IDA-designated Dark Sky Park
- "Apostle Islands Starry Skies Initiative"
- "Kickapoo Valley Dark Sky Initiative"
- "Copper Falls State Park dark sky"
- "Dark sky documentary," to watch "Northern Nights, Starry Skies"

**In print:**

- Paul Bogard, *The End of Night: Searching for Natural Darkness in an Age of Artificial Light*
- Travis Novitsky and Annette S. Lee, *Spirits Dancing: The Night Sky, Indigenous Knowledge, and Living Connections to the Cosmos*
- Sam Zimmerman, *Following My Spirit Home: A Collection of Paintings and Stories*

teaches writing at the University of Minnesota and offers on-site training programs to various organizations and companies. He has published several books on effective writing, as well as the Boundary Waters Canoe Area and the history of the Iowa Writers' Workshop. He is currently writing poems to illustrate a June 21-July 5 Avian Night Sky Exhibition at the Schmidt Artist Lofts near downtown St. Paul. In addition to serving as a FOECLA board member, he volunteers for Starry Skies North and for third and fifth grade teachers at his grandchildren's south Minneapolis elementary school.



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## Helpful Links

**Did you know?** [Dark Sky](#) is the recognized authority on night sky conservancy. They certify International Dark Sky Places, inform the public on the impact of excessive outdoor light, work with communities to advance responsible outdoor lighting, and certify outdoor lighting that reduces light pollution. Learn more about [Newport State Park](#), Wisconsin's own certified International Dark Sky Park.

**Did you know?** The [Taste of Barnes](#) is coming Saturday, June 15 and Sunday, June 16.

In case you missed it, the [FOECLA Spring 2024 Newsletter](#) is available on our website. For more great information on dark skies, see Stephen's previous article in the [FOECLA Spring 2023 Newsletter](#).

[Join or Renew](#) your Friends of Eau Claire Lakes Area membership for 2024.

**A Celebration of Life for Gerald "Gus" Gustafson** will take place on Saturday, June 15, from 3 - 5 pm at Georgia's, [11050 Ellison Lake Road](#).

Gus was passionate about the control of Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) on our local lakes and was principally responsible for building and maintaining the BAISS (Barnes Area Invasive Species Sucker) Pontoon Boat. He also initiated and oversaw construction of the Limno Curtain, used to section off areas of Tomahawk Lake for chemical treatment of Eurasian Watermilfoil (EWM). Memorials for Gus can be directed to the **Aquatic Invasive Species Fund** at the Town of Barnes, 3360 County Hwy N, Barnes, WI 54873. The celebration for Gus includes a potluck if you'd like to bring something to share. Gus will be greatly missed by our community.

## You're Invited!

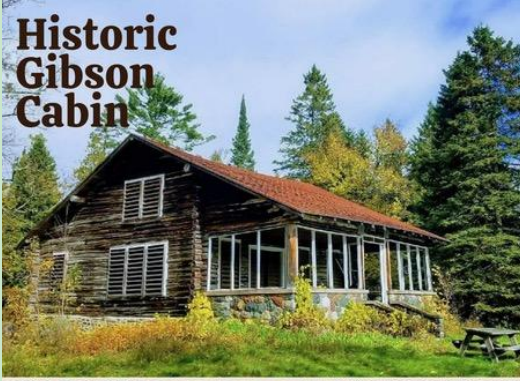
Members of the public are invited to a presentation about the Historic

Gibson Cabin sponsored by the Gordon-Wascott Historical Society.

What: *Historic Gibson Cabin along the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway*, presented by Jim Olmsted

When: **This Friday, June 7, program and social hour 6-8 p.m.**

Where: Gordon Town Hall



**A comprehensive history of the Gibson Cabin presented by:**

JIM OLMSTED

- Cedar log lodge built in 1915 as a vacation retreat
- Turned over to National Park Service in 1999
- Accessible on the North County National Scenic Trail



June 7th 6PM

Gordon Town Hall

## Northwest Wisconsin Lakes Conference

Friends of Eau Claire Lakes is proud to sponsor the [Northwest Wisconsin Lakes Conference](#) Friday, June 21, at the Spooner High School (less than an hour's drive from the Eau Claire Lakes). If you are interested in learning more about our lakes and the issues that affect them, we hope you'll consider attending.

### 2024 NWLC Registration Information

#### Conference Registration Fees

- \$45.00 Regular (lunch provided)
- \$10.00 Student (lunch provided)
- \$20.00 Exhibitor Table (lunch and presentations not included). Please visit the website for more details.

#### Online registration is easy & secure

For more information and to register visit:  
[nwwislakesconference.org](http://nwwislakesconference.org)

- Click on the registration link.
- Fill in all required fields and credit card information.
- An email confirmation will be sent after registration.

**Online Registration Closes: June 14, 2024**

#### Mail-in registration for those paying with a check.

For each registrant send the following information

- Name
- Phone number
- E-mail address
- Identify if you need a vegetarian or gluten free lunch.

Make check payable to **WCLRA-NWLC** & send to:

Attn: NWLC Registration  
Cathie Erickson  
W550 Walter Rd  
Stone Lake, WI 54876

**Mail-in registration must be received by June 14, 2024**

## Northwest Wisconsin Lakes Conference



Art Credit: Tanya Etzhammer

**Friday, June 21, 2024**

8:00 am to 3:45 pm

Spooner High School - Spooner, WI  
Website: [nwwislakesconference.org](http://nwwislakesconference.org)

**Mission: To protect, preserve and improve the environmental and aesthetic qualities of the Eau Claire Lakes Area watershed, including the lakes, rivers, shore lands, wetlands, forests and attendant wildlife resources.**

**BAYFIELD AND DOUGLAS COUNTIES, WI**

*Join us on Facebook where we share photos, stories, educational events and other opportunities to learn more about the the lakes, rivers, shore lands, wetlands and forests we treasurd  
Search for "Friends of the Eau Claire Lakes Area" or  
click on the blue Facebook icon below.*

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<https://friendsofeauclairelakesarea.com>



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