

Dark Skies

Back in the late 1960s, I spent a lot of time hiking the Sierra Nevadas, mostly around 10,000 feet. Far from any light and before the planet-wide haze of pollution, you could see many thousands of stars in incredible beauty. Every star is a different color. Thousands of shades of every imaginable color. When it's clear and dark enough, the sky is not black. All the colors blend into a quiet, faraway, white sky.

After billions of years of evolution under a dark night sky, it's suddenly gone. Most of the planet's species are firmly adapted to a day-night schedule and it's playing havoc with many life cycles, including our own. Many migration patterns are guided by the stars. Light pollution has many negative side effects throughout the spectrum of life on this planet. The disappearance of the stars has been a gradual process that snuck up on us relatively unnoticed.

The light pollution that hides the sky is a massive waste of electrical energy and the fix is absurdly simple. A reflective shield is almost as cheap as the light bulb and cuts electrical consumption by close to half. Low kelvin lighting is much healthier for pretty much all life and is no more expensive than high kelvin. The financial payback would be quick and the environmental payback would be immediate.

Because the fix is better than free on an individual level, all it would take is education, and maybe a small one time subsidy to make it happen.