

# Our Dark Skies

-Alan Sheiness



How often have you stopped to notice how wonderfully bright and alive the stars are in our peaceful town of Lyme, especially once turning off one of our 'major thoroughfares' like 156 or Brush Hill Road? That dark sky up there is a part of our world. It is as much a gift to us as are the forests, the trails within those forests, the rivers and waterways, and everything else that makes Lyme special. As part of the Sustainable CT effort ([sustainablect.org](http://sustainablect.org)) we seek to inform the public about *light pollution* and how to arrest its insidious spread across our region.

What do I mean by *light pollution*? Light pollution is what occurs when a preponderance of lighting, and poorly designed lighting fixtures, create a glare both locally and across entire swaths of geography, which renders the night sky as a dim shadow of itself.

The universe is ours to behold just for the simple act of looking up at night. Except, in so many places all over the country and indeed the world, *light pollution* is removing those vistas much as deforestation and asphalt and other aspects of modern life remove the natural wonders that are part of our terrestrial consciousness.

Guarding against light pollution really comes down to two simple principles: do not light what does not need to be lit, and when you do need to light something, do it with a source that is effective and efficient. Our little town, because of its almost non-existent commercialization and heavy forestation, is indeed a miraculous enclave from the typical onslaught of ineffective lighting. We need to keep it that way.

We can do so by ensuring that all new lighting projects, residential and commercial, take light pollution into account, protecting the night sky, no different than protecting a watershed or any other natural habitat. To the extent that existing installations are night sky-unfriendly, we should consider replacing those fixtures over time with ones that do a better job pointing down with an efficient light source.

Our environment makes Lyme what it is, and we can be a leader in the sky just as we are on the ground. Please endeavor to learn more about the beauty of the night sky and the threat of light pollution. A great place to start is here [International Dark-Sky Association](http://InternationalDark-SkyAssociation.org). Also, you can experience the splendor of our night sky first-hand, with experienced astronomers as your guide, by signing up for future observing sessions hosted by the Lyme Land Trust at [lymelandtrust.org](http://lymelandtrust.org).

That look up there is through a window into our universe, and it should be our intention to keep that window pristine for ourselves and our future generations.



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*Alan Sheiness is a ten-year resident of Lyme, CT, and Treasurer of The Lyme Land Trust. Among other interests, Alan is life-long astronomy enthusiast and astrophotographer. He has documented lunar eclipses, solar eclipses, the Venus transit of the Sun, a Mercury transit of the Sun, many of the planets, star clusters, and nebula; all admittedly decidedly amateur in result, but rewarding nonetheless. Alan is a promoter of dark skies and interested in establishing a new Astronomy Society in Lyme as an adjunct activity within the scope of the Lyme Land Trust. You may contact him at [alan.sheiness@icloud.com](mailto:alan.sheiness@icloud.com).*