

DarkSky International Debuts 'DarkSky One' Concept Car at Detroit Auto Show, Designed for Darkness

A first-of-its-kind concept car that challenges a long-standing assumption: that darkness is a problem to eliminate rather than a design opportunity.

TUCSON, AZ, UNITED STATES, January 14, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [DarkSky International](#), a global nonprofit dedicated to protecting the nighttime environment, today unveiled [DarkSky One](#), a first-of-its-kind concept car designed with darkness at the center of its vision.



Front-angle view of DarkSky One, a concept car designed for the night.

Debuting at the Detroit Auto Show, DarkSky One challenges a long-standing assumption in vehicle design: that darkness is something to overcome rather than something to design for. For decades, nighttime visibility has primarily been addressed through brighter headlights and high beams. While intended to improve safety, this limited approach can create blinding glare and reduce contrast while shining directly into the eyes of oncoming drivers. The result is a system that too often causes everyone on the road to see less, not more.

DarkSky One asks a different question: What if a car were designed for the night from the very beginning?

“DarkSky One is a creative provocation, illustrating darkness not as a problem to eliminate, but as a design opportunity,” said Ruskin Hartley, CEO and executive director of DarkSky International. “When we design for darkness from the start, we can illuminate more precisely, improve visibility to support safety, and reduce negative impacts on people, wildlife, and the nighttime environment.”

A growing source of light pollution

Vehicle headlights have become a uniquely challenging and rapidly expanding source of light pollution, often overlooked in both environmental policy and road safety regulations. Compared with most outdoor lighting, headlights combine high intensity, horizontal projection, wide spatial reach, blue-rich light spectra, and intermittent bursts of extreme brightness.

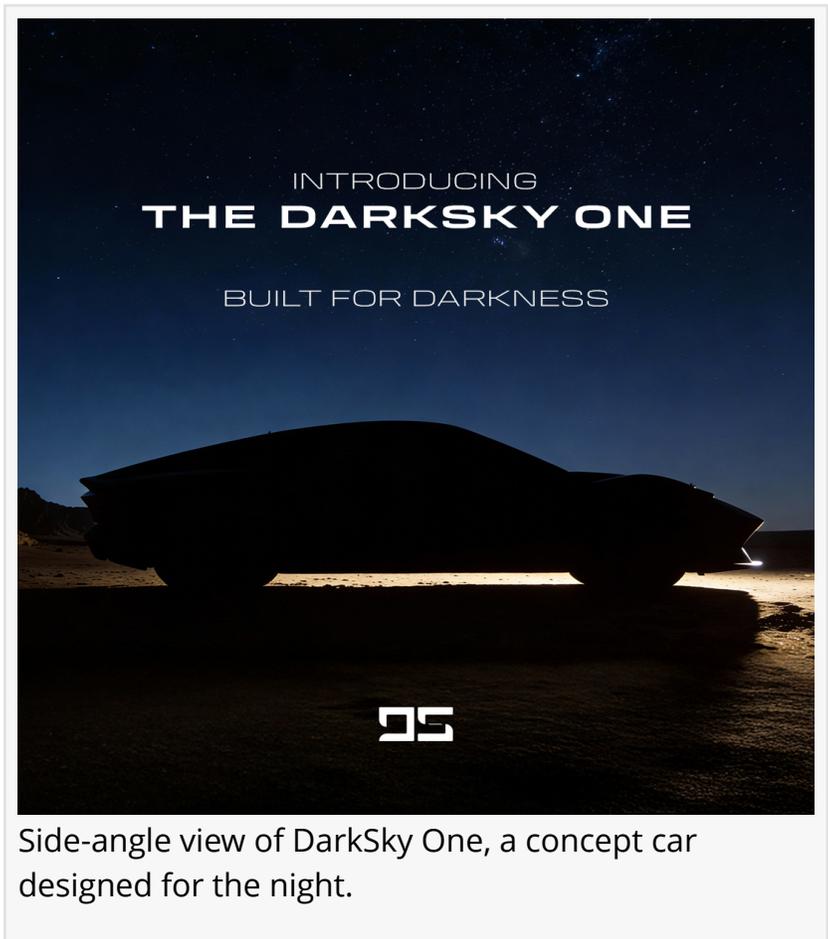
As part of the project, DarkSky developed a set of foundational recommendations for vehicle headlights, grounded in the organization's Five Principles for Responsible Outdoor Lighting. The recommendations call for:

- Capping brightness: Establishing a clear, data-driven ceiling on headlight intensity.
- Smarter lighting for safety: Advancing adaptive headlight systems that place light only where drivers need it.
- Warmer tones for better vision: Reducing blue-rich emissions that increase hazy glare and can harm nocturnal wildlife.
- Planning for darkness: Integrating light-pollution mitigation into road and transportation design for new projects and retrofits.
- Following the science: Expanding independent research to inform evidence-based standards.

Designing for darkness

DarkSky One was developed through a creative partnership between DarkSky International and Bray & Co, a New York-based advertising agency, through Purpose Produced, an initiative led by Advertising Week and SixDegrees.org, the nonprofit founded by Kevin Bacon, to pair nonprofits with creative agencies to develop pro bono campaigns.

To bring the concept car to life, DarkSky and Bray & Co partnered with Phiaro, a Tokyo-based automotive design firm. The resulting concept vehicle integrates environment-responsive lighting features developed specifically for nighttime driving, including adaptive driving light technology designed to reduce excess brightness and glare while supporting optimized light distribution.



Side-angle view of DarkSky One, a concept car designed for the night.

Beyond its lighting systems, the vehicle's physical design is also optimized for night with a matte exterior finish and surface geometry designed to minimize glare and reflections.

A new conversation begins

DarkSky One is designed to serve as a conversation starter, illustrating how responsible lighting principles can shape vehicle design and contribute to a safer, healthier nighttime environment.

To explore the concept and learn more, visit [DarkSkyMotors.com](https://www.darkskymotors.com)

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