

DarkSky International Announces Winners of 2026 Capture the Dark Global Photography Contest

Record-breaking contest draws 2,288 images from 30+ countries, showcasing the beauty of the night and the growing global impact of light pollution.

TUCSON, AZ, UNITED STATES, August 13, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [DarkSky International](#) is proud to announce the winners of [Capture the Dark 2026](#), the premier global nighttime photography contest celebrating the beauty, wonder, and importance of the night.

Now in its sixth year, Capture the Dark has grown into a globally recognized competition, reaching far beyond the dark sky movement into the broader conservation, photography, and arts communities. The contest champions responsible nighttime and astrophotography, encouraging photographers to follow [DarkSky's Principles for Responsible Astrophotography](#) while using their craft to reveal both what we stand to protect and what is increasingly at risk.

This year's contest received a record-breaking 2,288 submissions from more than 30 countries, creating a vivid portrait of the night—from sweeping Milky Way vistas and elusive nocturnal animals to the growing impacts of light pollution on people and wildlife alike.

The need to protect the night is increasingly urgent. Light pollution is growing globally at an estimated rate of nearly 10% each year, disrupting wildlife, affecting human health and community well-being, and making it increasingly difficult for people to experience dark and star-filled skies.

DarkSky International is working to reverse this trend through advocacy, education,



First Place | Nighttime Adventures — Aurora over the Prince Christian Sound by Dennis Lehtonen

conservation, and programs that advance responsible outdoor lighting and protect darkness worldwide.

Capture the Dark is an important part of that work. Across its categories, photographers document the extraordinary beauty and diversity of the night while confronting the ways artificial light is transforming it.

The result is more than a collection of remarkable photographs. Together, these images tell a global conservation story—celebrating the night, revealing what we stand to lose, and making a powerful case for protecting darkness for generations to come.

Capture the Dark 2026 contest first-place winners:

Nightscaapes: Paul Wilson, Razorback

Nighttime Adventures: Dennis Lehtonen, Aurora over the Prince Christian Sound

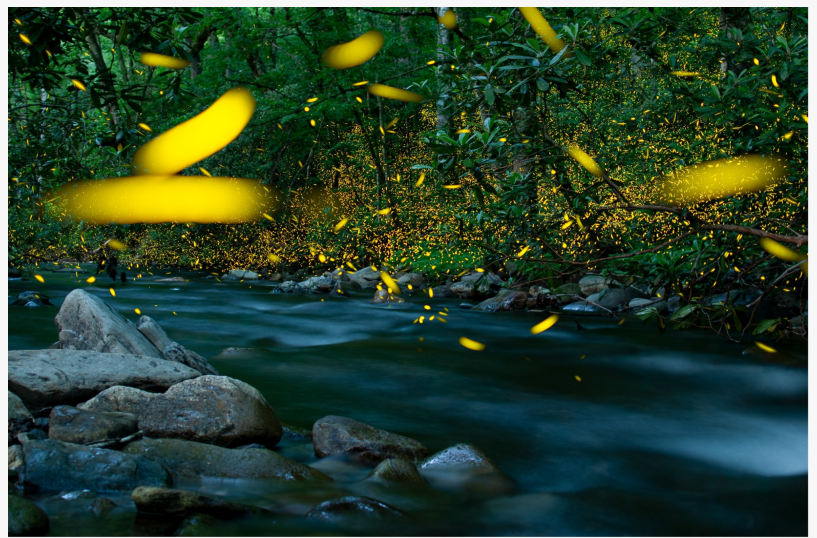
Creatures of the Night: Tom Rae, The Chasm

International Dark Sky Places: Kathryn Lawman, Window to Orio

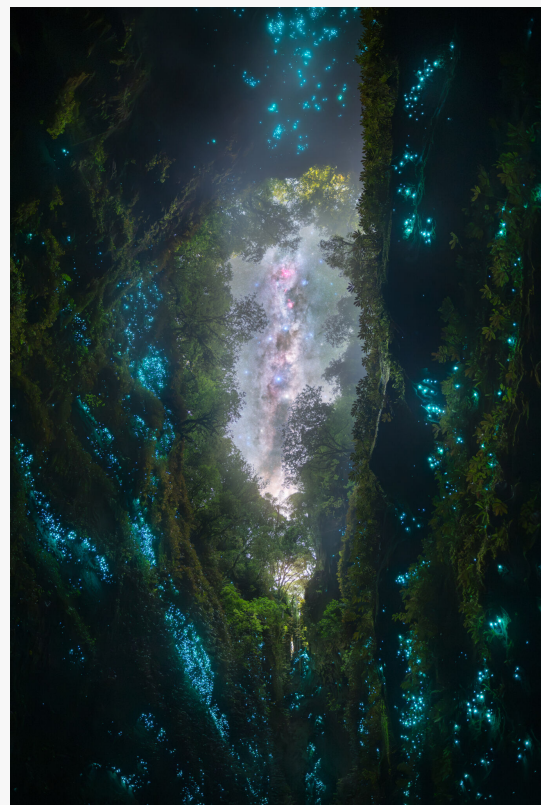
Quality Lighting and Design: Ross Steensland, Little Mt Hoffman

The Impact of Light Pollution: Kouyu Wang, Artifical Comet

Deep Sky Observations: Julien De Winter, The Dementors of Cepheus (LBN 528 & LBN 532), Wardens of a Dead Star (SNR G110.3+11.3)



First Place | Young Astrophotographers — River of Light by Norah Swann



First Place | Creatures of the Night — The Chasm by Tom Rae

Young Astrophotographers: Norah Swann, River of Light

Mobile Nighttime Photography: Enrique Barquet, Aurora Over Mount Shuksan

People's Choice Award: Ethan Keller, The Great Bear and the Rainbow Bridge La Grande Ourse et le pont arc-en-ciel

Explore the gallery:

Visit the Capture the Dark 2026 winners gallery to view the full collection of winning photographs, including second and third-place winners.

Thank you to our participants and sponsors:

DarkSky International and our team of contest organizers and judges extend our gratitude and appreciation to all participating photographers for making this year's contest our biggest and most celebrated yet. We also thank our event sponsors—Star Trek 60, Under Canvas, Celestron, Visit Tucson, and Visit Utah—and our prize sponsors—Sky View Tents, Lensbaby, Oberwerk, Vaonis, GoPro, PhotoPills, Move Shoot Move, and LRTimelapse—for making this event possible.

About DarkSky International:

DarkSky International is the leading global organization working to protect the night from light pollution. Since 1988, DarkSky has promoted responsible outdoor lighting and supported a worldwide network of advocates, partners, and certified Dark Sky Places. Learn more at www.darksky.org.

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