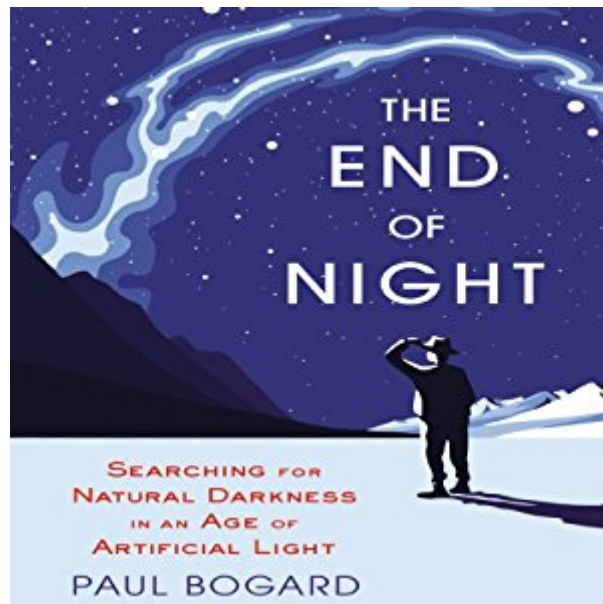


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The End Of Night: Searching For Natural Darkness In An Age Of Artificial Light



Synopsis

A deeply panoramic tour of the night, from its brightest spots to the darkest skies we have left. A starry night is one of nature's most magical wonders. Yet in our artificially lit world, three-quarters of Americans' eyes never switch to night vision and most of us no longer experience true darkness. In *The End of Night*, Paul Bogard restores our awareness of the spectacularly primal, wildly dark night sky and how it has influenced the human experience across everything from science to art. From Las Vegas' Luxor Beam - the brightest single spot on this planet - to nights so starlit the sky looks like snow, Bogard blends personal narrative, natural history, science, and history to shed light on the importance of darkness - what we've lost, what we still have, and what we might regain - and the simple ways we can reduce the brightness of our nights tonight.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

So far, every reader review of this book gives *The End of Night* five stars. Yes, it really is that good. As someone who knows something about this topic, I am delighted to find an author able to reveal so much that is new to me. Bogard is not the first important writer to recognize that contemporary culture suffers from a deepening state of "nature deficit disorder." And it is true that our humanity is diminished by the shrinking role that the natural world plays in our lives. The greatest minds in history have always found the infinite in nature. Emerson and Thoreau found it in the forests of New England. John Muir and Ansel Adams found it in the Sierra Nevada mountains. Jacques Cousteau found it beneath the surface of the sea. But the night sky is different. It is the only natural realm that

that virtually all of our ancestors experienced. It shaped our evolution in ways most of us don't recognize. Bogard does a remarkable job of conveying the depth of what we've lost now that it is almost impossible to see the sky as our ancestors saw it. As a writer myself, I am envious of Bogard's success at blending so many themes into a single, unified book. Most people who've tackled this topic in the past have concentrated on discreet parts of the issue - the nature of light pollution, the cultural history of stargazing, the ongoing efforts to restore darkness, etc. Bogard manages to tell a story that is a remarkable hybrid of the entire subject. I've never seen a book anything like it before. Yes, it really is that good. Is there a way to give it six stars?

Paul Bogard's *The End of Night* is an eloquent, lyrical, heart-felt meditation on the night sky. A personal odyssey in search of "real dark," Bogard takes the reader on a journey through the stars and constellations both within our own souls and the magical dark of the sky above. The book is cleverly organized around a descending scale of darkness, from the bright glare of Las Vegas, to the near perfect dark of the desert Southwest. Bogard travels the world, interviewing various experts, from astronomers and city planners, to nurses and janitors working the night shift, trying to answer the question of what the ideal balance would be -- environmentally, physically, and spiritually -- between civilization's need for artificial light and the planet's primal, fundamental necessity for darkness. Though equal parts personal memoir, travelogue, astronomy, science, and nature, ultimately, *The End of Night* is a call to action disguised as great literature, full of lyricism, metaphor and beauty.

When it comes to researching the human relationship to light and the night sky, most books either approach the subject in a historical storytelling manner, a scientific research manner, or less often in terms of the human spiritual relationship to light and dark, day and night. What is so whole-fully engaging about this book is that it combines all of these methods. Bogard's writing summarizes the most interesting facts and history about light and the absence of light, while taking the reader on a narrative journey from the brightest places on the planet to the darkest. I was so captivated by this book that I read it from front to back in two days, wishing the whole time that I could physically be in the places the book took my mind to. This book will make you want to travel in order to experience a truly dark night sky. Most importantly, this book notes that the night sky is not only pleasurable due to its beauty, but it is also an important way of being reminded of how vast the universe is, how special our tiny planet is, and how disconnected from these systems that support our lives we now are... to the point that it is affecting our physical, mental, and spiritual health. While reading I felt equally

happy about our human technological accomplishments in lighting as I did feel sad about the tragedy that comes with the loss of darkness. But the book ends on a positive note, discussing advances in technology which may help us to solve our problems with the overabundance of bad and unhealthy lighting in the future. Read this book, turn off your computer, turn off your lights, go outside and appreciate the night.

As a young lad of about 10, I remember hanging out with a friend and scanning the sky with a small telescope as we discovered wonder after wonder under the skies in a small New Hampshire town in the 50's. Years later I remember pulling over to the side of the road that heads up to the Grand Canyon, just blown away by the amazing spectacle the stars presented under a truly dark sky. I did not have a repeat of the experience until a nighttime trip during a sailboat crossing from Ft. Lauderdale to the Bahamas. (And the Miami glow is visible from a long way out!) While I find it hard to believe the statistic presented in the book that 80% of American children have never seen the Milky Way, I certainly understand the concept of light pollution and the need to try to restore the dark sky in more places. The author points out that it is difficult to make progress based on the idea that it is more beautiful to have dark skies, the common human idea that at night, the brighter, the better from a safety standpoint. (Some rather interesting ideas in this book that refute that argument.) So, the dark sky supporters will be casting the argument in terms of energy and cost savings. Some interesting ideas about lighting design are included as well. Frankly, the book deserves 3.5 stars as it is an interesting and important topic. I down graded it from a 4 because in places it seems like he is getting paid by word and it would tend to plod. I really did not need to know the entrees of a three course meal at an Italian restaurant. He has found some interesting people to interview, with interesting insight and some of the material related to the history of street lighting can be fascinating. Just seems to take a lot to get his points across.

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