



The countryside charity
Sussex

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Lockdown Star Count is a Golden Opportunity

Sussex's star studded skies are the perfect escape from lockdown cabin fever and a golden opportunity for scientists this year, according to the countryside charity, CPRE Sussex.

The charity says that with less traffic in the air and on the roads, the stars could be the brightest they have been for a generation and is urging people to take part in a unique snapshot of the state of the county's dark skies.

Last year the charity's annual survey showed that more than half the population of Sussex suffered from severe light pollution around their homes. But have Sussex's skies improved during Lockdown?

"Star-filled skies are a truly magical sight," says CPRE Sussex Director, Kia Trainor, "but sadly, over the past decades, fewer and fewer people have been able to experience the joy of truly dark skies."

"It will be very interesting to see if lockdown has brought about any reduction in light pollution, and if so, if this reduction is widespread or localised. However, for this study to be successful we need as many people as possible to take part in our Star Count."

The star count (Feb 6 – 14) has been designed for anyone of any age to take part without leaving their own homes. Stargazers can download a simple guide which will show them how to count the number of stars they can see within the constellation of Orion.

Robin Durant who is Chairman of Adur Astronomical Society and a keen Astro Photographer says he has noticed changes in the skies during lockdown but not all for the better:

To promote, enhance and protect a thriving countryside for everyone's benefit

President: Lord Egremont

Campaign to Protect Rural England Sussex Branch CIO | Registered charity number: 1156568

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“I have noticed the quality of the sky during lock down mainly because there is little aircraft movement interrupting my imaging,” he says, “however being in Brighton the light pollution is just the same, or even worse.”

Anyone can take part in the Star Count from their home – either in the garden or through a south west facing window.

Founder of the East Sussex Astronomical Society, Andy Lawes has these tips for stargazers:

“Find a sheltered spot away from direct light,” he says, “and give your eyes time to adjust. This is known as dark adaptation. You can’t just go outside and look at the sky. Be patient. Stand out there for 10 to 20 minutes and you will progressively see more and more stars.”

“Once you’ve located your target, you’ll have a better view if you can keep any ground illumination from entering your peripheral vision. One way to do this is to wear a hooded sweatshirt that you can pull up over your head. Some observers simply drape a dark-coloured towel over their head.”

“Finally, if you need some illumination, avoid white light, which hampers your night vision. Instead use a torch with a red lens, or place some red cellophane over the end.”

CPRE Sussex’s Star Count guide can be found here:

<https://www.cpresussex.org.uk/news/seeing-stars/>

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Notes to editors

About Star Count

Star Count is an annual citizen science project from CPRE, the countryside charity and the British Astronomical Association. From 6-14 February 2021, the public are asked to look heavenwards during a clear night and count how many stars within Orion they can spot.

Results from Star Count will help make a map of where star-spotters are enjoying deep, dark skies and where people's views are affected by light pollution. By showing on a map where light pollution is most serious, we can work nationally and with local councils and others to decide what to do about it

This year we're asking everyone to take part from home - people can stargaze from their garden, balcony, doorstep or even bedroom window.

About CPRE Sussex, the countryside charity

We are CPRE Sussex, the countryside charity. Our vision is for a beautiful and thriving Sussex countryside that enriches all our lives. [Homepage - CPRE Sussex](#)

About the British Astronomical Association

The British Astronomical Association is Britain's largest astronomical organisation, with thousands of members nation-wide. Its Commission for Dark Skies was founded in 1989 and aims to ensure quality lighting in the UK. A well-lit environment below and a view of the starry sky above are not incompatible.

About Go Stargazing

Go Stargazing encourages public interest in astronomy by helping people find stargazing events and destinations across the UK, this via the gostargazing.co.uk website and social media channels. The organisation is formed of a group of amateur astronomers all keen on public outreach -- we love to show people amazing things using large telescopes under dark, starry skies! We are strong advocates of protecting our night time skies from light pollution and have worked with a number of regions helping them to secure Dark Sky Park / Reserve accreditation from the International Dark Sky Association.