

YOUR GUIDE TO THE STARS (the real ones)

About Dark Sky Preserves

We're known for our dynamic, bright, open skies in Saskatchewan—and that isn't limited to daylight hours.

Here, you can see night skies that are as expansive as our horizons.

Southern Saskatchewan is home to two Dark Sky Preserves (DSP): Grasslands National Park Dark Sky Preserve, and Cypress Hills Interprovincial Park Dark Sky Preserve.

Dark Sky Preserves exist to protect and preserve the darkest skies in the world. These skies are free of artificial light pollution, and are the perfect place for astronomy and stargazing.

Cypress Hills became a Dark Sky Preserve in 2004, and Grasslands in 2009.

Protection of the land and limited development has preserved these dark skies, and has led to healthier ecosystems with natural cycles of light. Once considered extinct in Canada, the nocturnal Black-footed Ferret was reintroduced to the west block of Grasslands National Park.

With amenities and camping located in these Dark Sky Preserves, it's easy to go on a hike to the stars, and step into a world of wonder.

Stargazing Playlist

Lay back, plug in and marvel at the wonders of the darkest skies in Canada while listening to our special stargazing [Spotify](#) playlist.

Tips for Stargazing

Here are a few tips, from amateur astronomer Richard Huziak, to help you maximize your stargazing experience and guide you through a night at a Dark Sky Preserve.



Bring a red flashlight: using a red light doesn't obstruct your vision the way a blue light does. You can purchase red LED flashlights, or use a red filter over top of a regular flashlight.



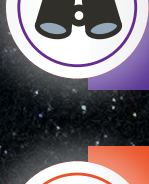
Bring an attitude that respects darkness: use subtle light, and make sure your light is directed to the ground.



Bundle up: because stargazing isn't a high-aerobic activity, and it gets cold at night (even in the summer) - make sure you wear warm clothes, shoes and a toque, so that you're toasty-warm while you watch the stars.



Bring a blanket: to watch the stars. Within our DSP there is a wide array of grass and vegetation. Bring a blanket so you can lay back, relax and enjoy it!



Binoculars: you can see the stars clearly just using your eyes, but bring some binoculars for an extra-vivid light show. No heavy-duty telescope needed—but if you have one, bring one!



A star chart: is a map of the night sky. It helps you locate stars, constellations, and planets. It might look confusing at first, but they're easy to learn how to use, and available to print-off from many online [resources](#).



A stargazing app: there are many of these apps to choose from, and they make locating stars and constellations easy. Simply hold your phone up to an area in the sky, and the apps tell you what you're looking at. If you're using an app, make sure you set your phone backlight to a red screen, or "night-mode," to minimize its blue light. [Check out these stargazing apps.](#)



Let your eyes adjust: it takes 10 to 30 minutes for your eyes to fully adjust from being exposed any type of light, to full darkness.

What to Look For

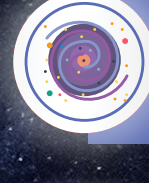
With skies so full of life and wonder, it's exciting to know what you're looking at—or looking for. Here are a few things that you'll notice while you're marveling at the skies in a Dark Sky Preserve.



The Moon: is extra bright! On some nights, after your eyes adjust to the night sky, you can see your surroundings fully lit up from the light of the moon. Stargazing is best before, during and after a new moon phase.



Planets: look for stars that stand out and are brighter than others. These are often planets! Use your star chart to find out.



The Milky Way: on a DSP, it's easy to spot the Milky Way. Look for a milky-white band of a cluster of stars. On some nights, you can see the dust clouds surrounding the stars.



The Ecliptic: this is an imaginary plane. It's the plane on which all our solar system's planets travel! If you're facing south, it usually exists halfway up the sky. You can define the ecliptic by tracing lines between the planets that you can see.



Constellations: the position of constellations change from our perspective on Earth, depending on the time of night. Use your stargazing app, or your star chart to locate the patterns of stars.



Northern Lights: while Grasslands and Cypress Hills are located in southern Saskatchewan, you can look north and often see a green glow. This is a glow from the Northern Lights, or Aurora Borealis. The light may slightly obstruct the darkness of the DSPs, but they are a beautiful sight to experience, nonetheless.