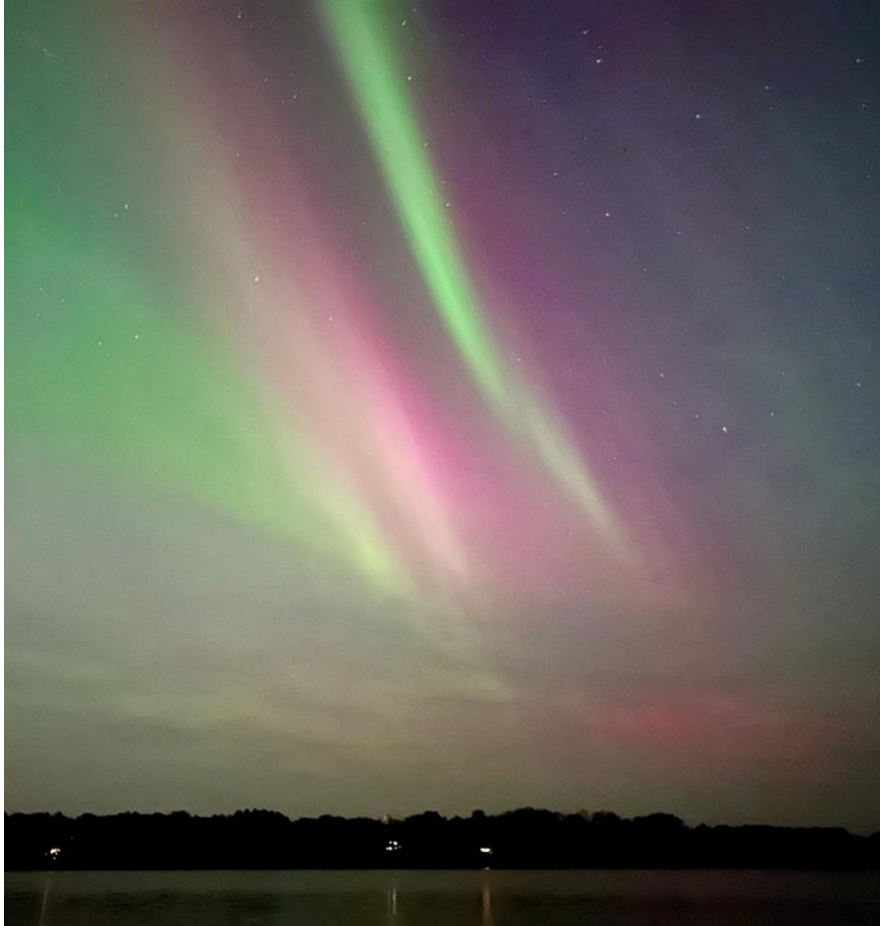


Preserving the Beauty of the Night Sky – Sensible Shoreland Lighting

By Bob Jacobel



*Aurora Borealis (Northern Lights) above Diamond Lake, October 10, 2024.
Photo: Pam Jacobel*

Here on Diamond Lake it is often possible to sit on a dock or a cabin deck on a clear dark summer night, and see the Milky Way stretched across the sky or a meteor tracing its path through the constellations. This past October, the Northern Lights were visible over the lake putting on a spectacular show.

Unfortunately, this experience can be disturbed or even made impossible by outside lights carelessly left on at a neighboring cabin, or even by lights shining across the open space from another side of the lake, or reflecting from the water.

Recently it has become even easier to add light pollution to the night sky due to the advent and widespread availability of low-power-consuming LED bulbs and solar-charged batteries. These low cost “solar lights” are ubiquitous now in hardware and discount stores, advertised for their convenience, because you just stick them in the ground and they “take care of themselves.” No wires to hook-up, no switches to bother with, nothing to install.

Unfortunately, the consequences of this convenience are devices that charge throughout the day and then stay on all night, week after week, whether the lighting is needed for anything or not.

But What About When We Need Outdoor Lighting?

Obviously, there are times when outside light IS needed: for safety guiding walkers along a path, to deter animals (and perhaps others), or when you really *are* using the deck and want low lighting.

Fortunately for lake homeowners, there are easy solutions for providing lighting for safety and security around our property while preserving the darkness and clarity of the night sky – in all seasons.

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources has a pamphlet available [here](#) with the same title as the above lead (and from which inspiration for some of this message has been derived). The pamphlet discusses these issues and offers a number of simple solutions, including new, inexpensive and easy-to-install motion-detecting lamps, and ways of reducing glare by orienting light downward where it is needed, instead of up into the sky or outward across the lake.

This issue has been raised at annual meetings in the past and discussed more recently at a number of Board meetings, so it is of more than hypothetical interest. Perhaps the simplest thing of all is just for each of us to be more aware of the status of our outdoor lights, to remember to turn them off when not needed, and avoid using stand-alone battery-operated solar lights. Our neighbors and everyone on the lake will benefit from this simple courtesy.