

Working to preserve the night sky

By Kate Siber, Outdoor

On May 24, 2015, at 3am., filmmaker Ben Canales sat on a ridge overlooking the gleaming lights of Telluride, Colo. One by one, blocks of streetlamps winked off far below. Canales had convinced many residents to turn off their lights as part of a special event during Mountainfilm, the annual outdoors-focused movie festival. He also persuaded the town's maintenance department to flip the switches to all of the municipal lights.

"No town has ever turned the lights off," he says. "By doing this, it makes a statement that we control our technology. It's here to serve us. We're not in servitude of it."

About 80 people gathered downtown in the middle of the night to experience a sliver of what every generation before our grandparents knew intimately as a birthright: darkness. It was a milestone in the growing movement to preserve the night sky.

By any estimate, it's a losing battle. According to a study in *Science Advances* released this month, 99 percent of the population of the United States lives under a night sky polluted by artificial lights in places like parking lots, gas stations, streets, and backyards.

Read the whole story