



An Roinn
Ealaíon, Oidhreachta agus Gaeltachta
Department of
Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht



Mayo Dark Skies



MAYO DARK-SKIES PROJECT

William Cormacan, National Parks & Wildlife Service

So ...what is a Dark-Sky Park?

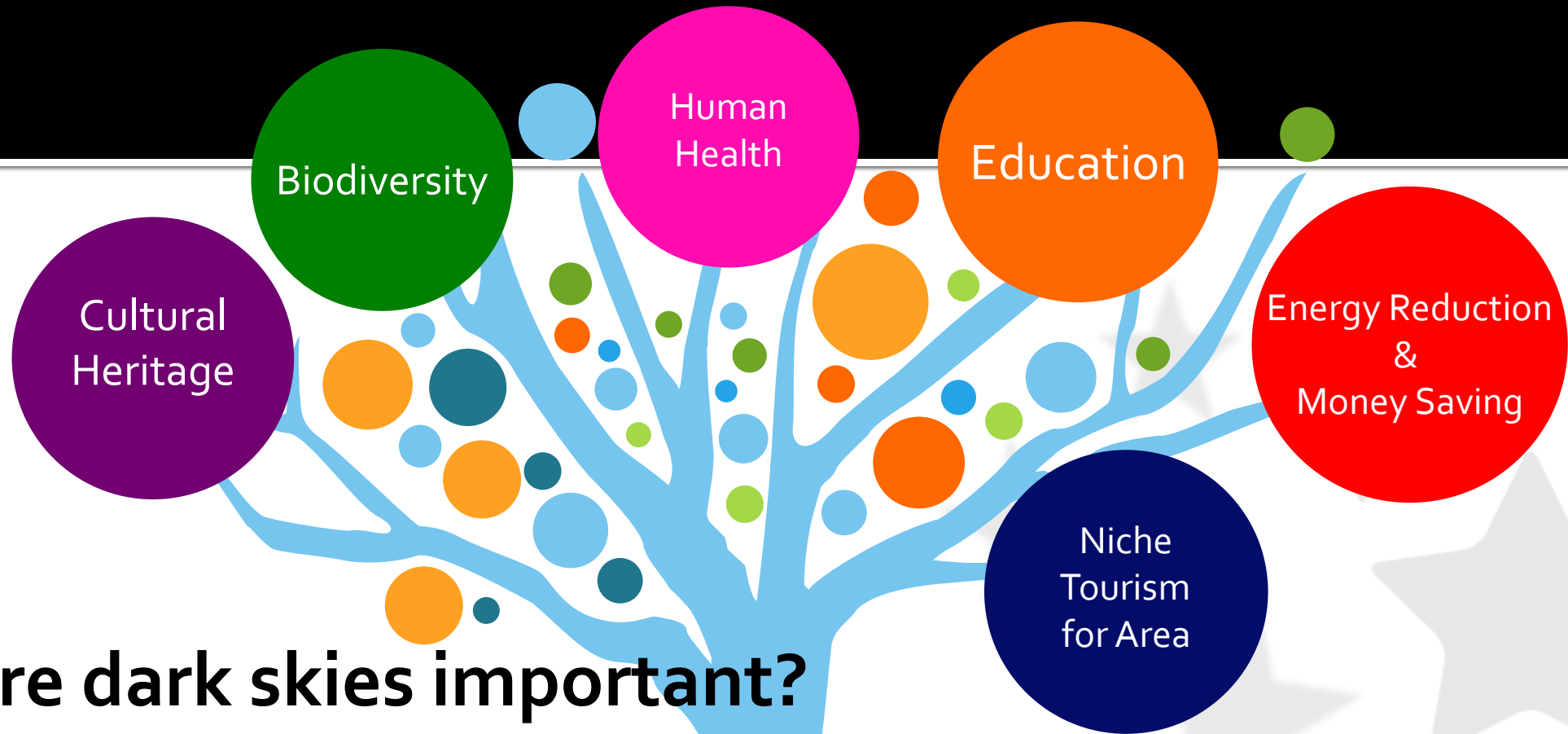
It is more than just Dark! Officially described as:

*A recognised park or other public land possessing exceptional starry skies and a natural nocturnal habitat where light pollution is mitigated and **natural darkness valued as an important, educational, cultural, scenic and natural resource.***

Sanctioned by International Dark-sky Association (est 1988), a USA based authority, with world wide recognition (UNESCO 2014).

Why are dark skies important?

It's not just ASTRONOMY – Education, Science, Energy, Biodiversity



Dark Sky Objectives



- ◆ Creation of GOLD TIER Dark-sky Park in Mayo
- ◆ Develop Niche off-season Initiative for Astro-tourism & astro-photography, Archaeo-Astronomy, Sustainable Enviro-Friendly
- ◆ Preserve existing dark places without compromising safety
- ◆ Community Involvement - eg Citizen Scientist, Stargazing courses
- ◆ Raise awareness of Impact of Light Pollution
- ◆ Connect with biodiversity & environmental objectives of Ballycroy National Park
- ◆ Target inclusion of light pollution in policy and planning
- ◆ Develop Dark Sky Network & collaborative model

What are people coming to see....



Astro photos



Astro photos around the area....



Astro photos



Satellite images of light pollution/inhabitation

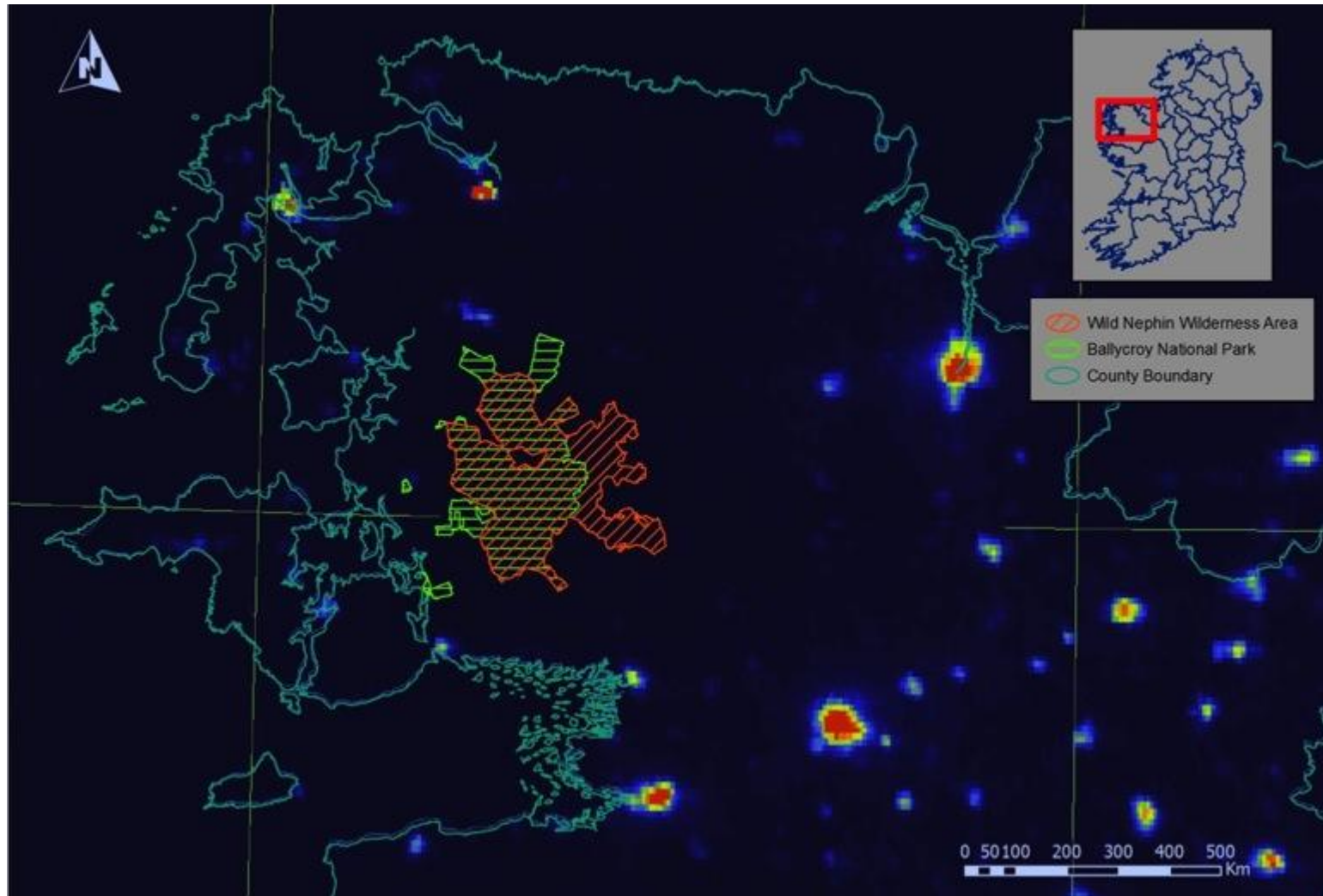


Photo taken from NASA satellite data, Prof. Brian Espey



[Broadsheet Map of Populated areas \(census 2011\)](#)-

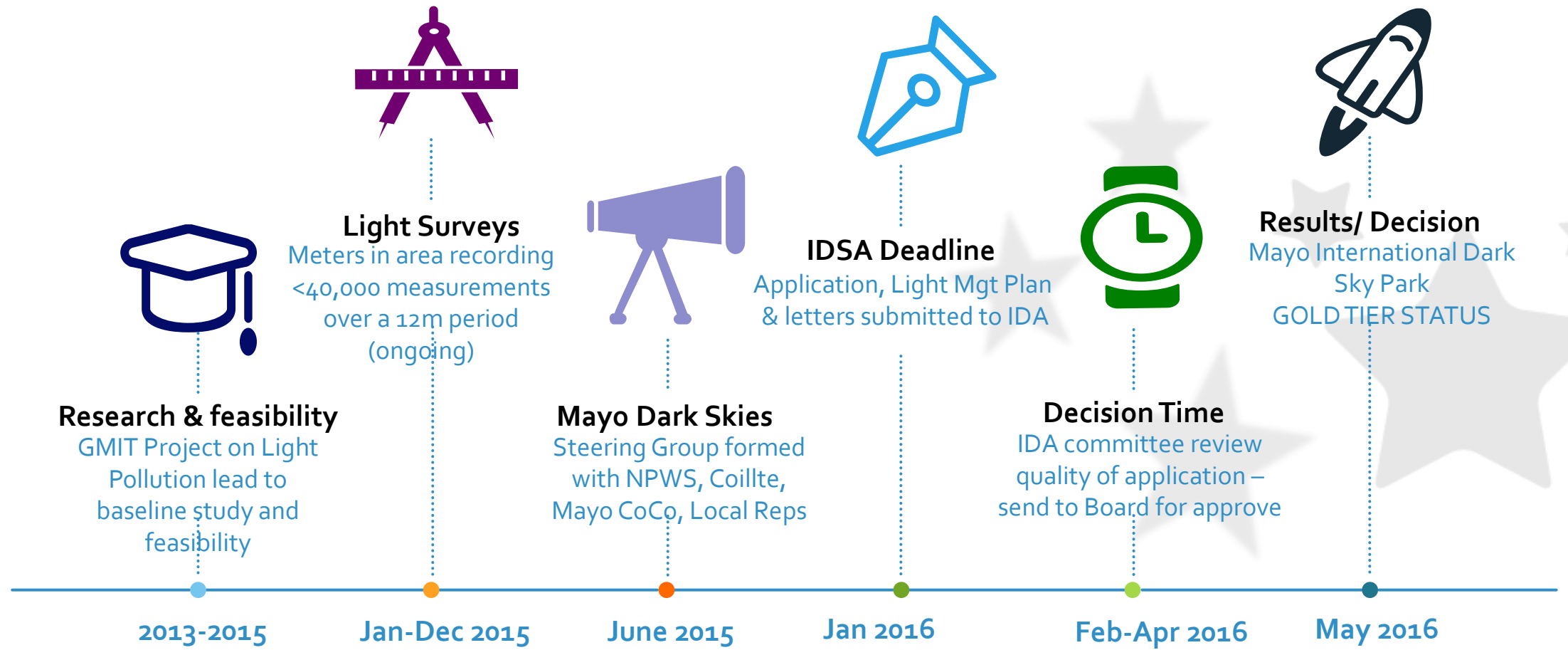
Night time aerial shot of Mayo Dark-sky Park



Land Boundaries of
Ballycroy National Park &
Wild Nephin

Other lighted areas show
excessive lighting from
towns/villages

What's been happening in Mayo.....?



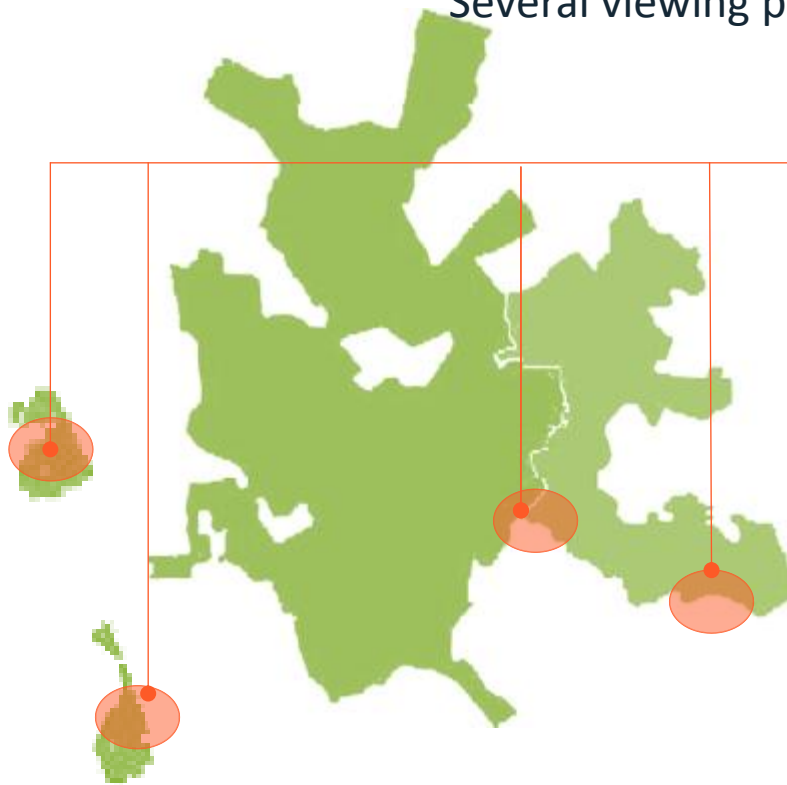
Let's reduce light waste...



Our Locations for Dark-sky viewing

Surveys taken from 12 locations around the area of Wild Nephin/Ballycroy National Park.

Several viewing points recommended for Astronomy & Dark sky visitors & classified by accessibility



Visitor Centre, Claggan, Letterkeen, Wild Nephin Viewing Point



Signage will be prepared and erected at viewing points that are easy for visitors to park and access around the site

Complete the 360 degree experience...



- *Dark-sky Rangers*
- *Astronomy & Science Education*
- *Storytelling & Myths of the stars*
- *Astro Heritage / Archaeo-astronomy*
- *Creative accommodation*

Creative, Off-season Tourism....

Dark Skies open up off-season niches such as:

- *Star gazing & Astro photography / Light Painting*
- *Night time paddles /Hikes /Camps*
- *Nocturnal environmental field trips*



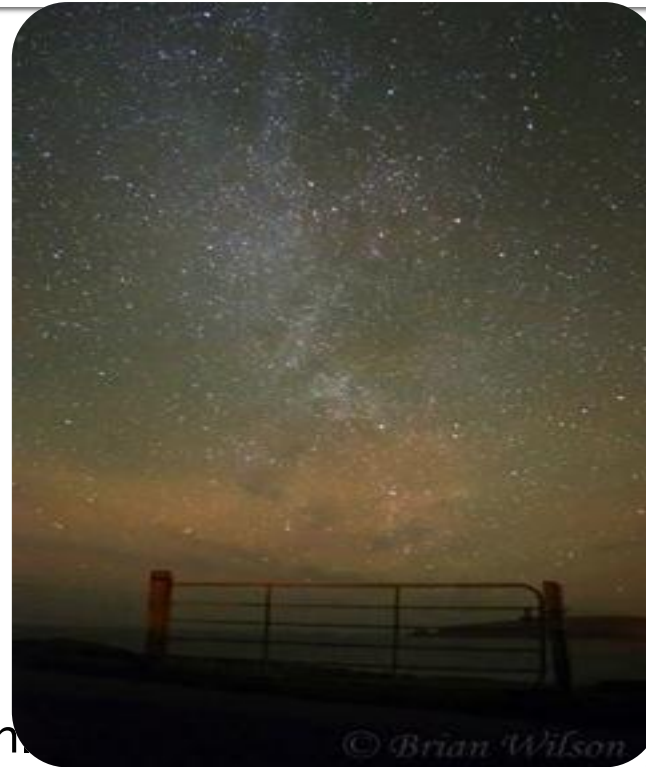


The weekend will include:

- Talks by acclaimed speakers
 - Workshops
 - Exhibits and displays
 - Children's activities
 - Star Party in Letterkeen Wood
 - Solar Observing
 - Planetarium
 - Model rocket building
 - Sketching
 - Table Quiz
- ... and much more!

Keep up to date : www.facebook.com/Mayo-Dark-Sky-Festival

Mayo International Dark-sky Park

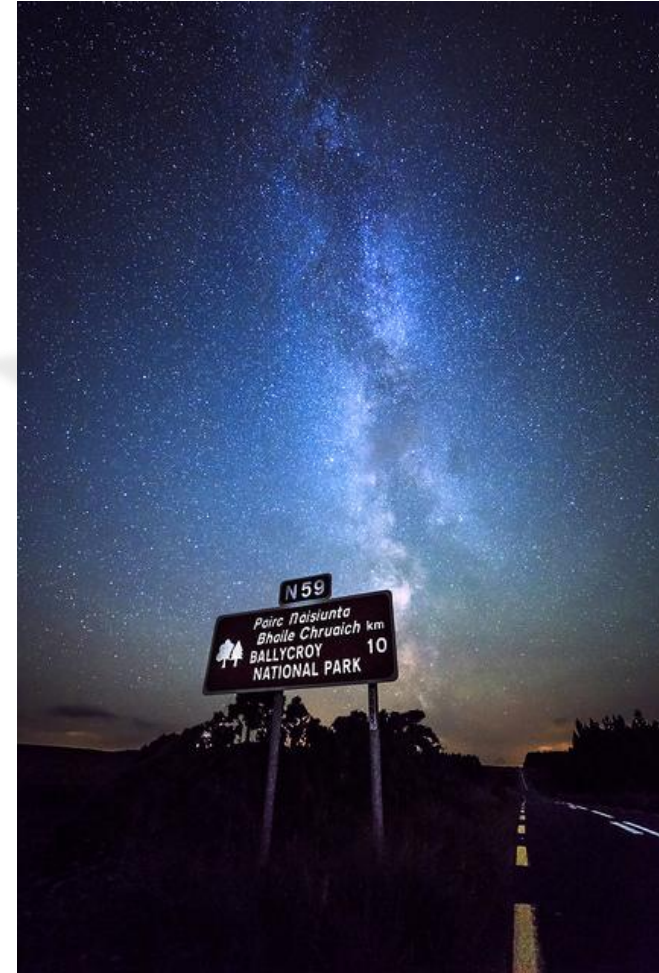


Photos courtesy of Brian Wilson & Steven Ham

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Mayo International Dark-sky Park



Cultural inspiration from the Night Skies

- It often seems to me that night is still more richly coloured than the day; having hues of the most intense violets, blues and greens.

Vincent van Gogh



- “It is indeed a feeble light that reaches us from the starry sky. But what would human thought have achieved if we could not see the stars?”

Jean Perrin – 19th Century French Physicist

- ‘I can only think clearly in the dark’, he observed, ‘and in Connemara I have found one of the last pools of darkness in Europe.’

Ludwig Wittgenstein – Austrian Philosopher
(Quote from Tim Robinson’s Connemara)

- “Starry skies” inspire
 - Philosophy
 - Art
 - Literature
 - Science & Education