



International Dark-Sky Association

"... to preserve and protect the nighttime environment and our heritage of dark skies"

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GALLOWAY FOREST PARK AND THE ZSELIC NATIONAL LANDSCAPE PROTECTION AREA SIMULTANEOUSLY BECOME THE FIRST EUROPEAN DARK SKY PARKS

November 15, 2009, Phoenix, AZ – The IDA Board of Directors announced the designation of two additional International Dark Sky Parks at the 21st Annual Meeting and Conference of the International Dark-Sky Association in Phoenix, AZ, USA. Galloway Forest Park in Scotland, United Kingdom, and the Zselic National Landscape Protection Area, in Hungary, simultaneously became the first European International Dark Sky Parks.

Recognition as an International Dark Sky Park (IDSPark) requires more than just a star filled sky; intense long term planning, retrofitting, and preservation efforts are required to fulfill the application prerequisites. Prerequisites include a lighting management plan, examples of retrofitting/building under the plan, and intense public awareness of the lighting retrofits and the night sky as a natural resource. Both parks sought the designation as part of the International Astronomical Union (IAU) and United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) International Year of Astronomy (IYA 2009), the goal of which is to help citizens of the world rediscover their place in the Universe. The IDSParks is part of the IYA 2009 Dark Skies Awareness Cornerstone Project.

Galloway Forest Park, established in 1947, is located in southern Scotland in the Dumfries and Galloway council area and is the UK's largest forest park at 75,000 hectares (185,330 acres). Approximately 20% of the park has been set aside as the central core of the park, a dark sky and wildlife preserve, with a policy of no permanent

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illumination. Professor Ian Robson, director at the UK Astronomy Technology Centre in Edinburgh writes, “Galloway Forest Park is one of the very best places to observe the night sky in the UK, its management recognises the dark skies as a valuable resource and are committed to protecting and preserving them, and the remoteness and sparse population, combined with the newly adopted lighting management plan, ensure that Galloway Forest Park’s skies will remain pristine for generations to come.”

Dr. Hugh Insley, Chief Executive of the Forest Enterprise Head Office Scotland adds, “The principals behind the Dark Sky movement fit with the objectives of Forestry Commission Scotland and those of the Scottish Government. I am sure that through this award we will be demonstrating best practice in lighting sustainability, and educating our visitors and community of the benefits of good lighting practice, reducing light pollution, and carbon emissions.” Numerous supporting recommendations, including the recommendations of IDA board director, Martin Morgan Taylor, and past board director, Derek McNally, solidified the application and verified the outstanding sky quality, often over 21 magnitudes per square arcsecond.

The Zselic Starry Sky Park at the Zselic National Landscape Protection Area began as a project between the Duna-Dráva National Park Directorate and the Hungarian Astronomical Association (HAA) at the 2nd Light Pollution Meeting in Hungary on October 27, 2006. The agreement, signed by the director of the National Park Directorate and the president of the Hungarian Astronomical Association, provided for the formation of a conservation area of the night sky in the Directorate’s management plan where the HAA would perform sky quality measurements and educational activities. Established in 1976 to protect the natural assets of the North Zselic region, the park encompasses 9042 hectares (22,343 acres).

After the initial proposal signing, the project expanded its outreach by working with the surrounding 17 municipalities and the Lighting Society of Hungary to minimize the communities’ impacts on the park. Finally, the outdoor lighting renovation of the Hotel Kardosfa and the surrounding park recreational buildings to include dark sky friendly lighting assisted in minimizing the light pollution impacts from within the park. Zoltán Kolláth, research advisor at Konkoly Observatory of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and IDA Hungary Section Leader spearheaded the application process and writes, “my determination to save the stars at the Zselic Landscape Protection Area has kept strengthening – I found the beauty of the sky again in this remote location...M33, the Triangulum Galaxy can be seen with the naked eye on clear nights. The zodiacal light is clearly visible in spring and autumn...I can confirm that the quality of the night sky is

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definitely better than the minimal expectations for a ‘silver tier’.”

Szabolcs Závoczky, Director of the Duna-Dráva National Park Directorate, states, “Zselic is one of the best places with close to unaltered dark night skies in Hungary. The natural nocturnal environment is very important for the local species and the landscape. The dark sky is a significant natural resource to be preserved and protected.”

Both parks exemplified the International Dark Sky Parks program through their lighting management plans, public outreach initiatives, and lighting retrofits that cannot be described in a press release alone. Full applications are available online at <http://docs.darksky.org/DarkSkyPlaces/IDSPGalloway> for Galloway Forest Park and <http://docs.darksky.org/DarkSkyPlaces/IDSPZselic> for the Zselic Starry Sky Park. For further information on the IDSPaces program please visit www.darksky.org/page/IDSPaces.

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