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night lasts roughly 12 hours throughout the year.[15] The tropics have little difference in the length of day and night.[14] At the 45th parallel, the longest winter night is roughly twice as long as the shortest summer night.[16] Within the polar circles, night will last the full 24 hours of the winter solstice.[13] The length of this polar night increases closer to the poles. Utqiagvik, Alaska, the northernmost point in the United States, experiences 65 days of polar night.[17] At the pole itself, polar night lasts 179 days from September to March.[17] Diagram of atmospheric refraction at sunrise and sunset Over a year, there is more daytime than nighttime because of the Sun's size and atmospheric refraction. The Sun is not a single point.[18] Sunlight from Earth, the Sun angles in angular diameter from 31 to 35 arcminutes.[19] When the center of the Sun falls to the western horizon, half of the Sun will still be visible during sunset. Likewise, by the time the center of the Sun rises to the eastern horizon, half of the Sun will already be visible during sunrise.[20] This shortens night by about three minutes in temperate zones.[21] Atmospheric refraction is larger factor.[18] Refraction bends sunlight over the horizon.[21] On Earth, the Sun remains briefly visible after it has geometrically fallen below the horizon.[21] This shortens night by about six minutes.[21] Scattered, diffuse sunlight remains in the sky after sunset and into twilight.[22] The drainage basin of the Nile River and delta at night. Twilight, the gradual transition to and from darkness when the Sun is below the horizon, has multiple stages.[23] "Civil" twilight occurs when the Sun is between 0° and 6° below the horizon. Nearby planets like Venus and bright stars like Sirius are visible during this period.[24] "Nautical" twilight continues until the Sun is 12° below the horizon.[25] During nautical twilight, the horizon is visible enough for navigation.[26] Astronomical" twilight continues until the Sun is 18° below the horizon.[24] Beyond 18°, refraction is no longer visible.[27] The period when the sun is 18° or more below either horizon is called astronomical night.[25] Similar to the duration of night, the duration of twilight varies according to latitude.[27] At the equator, day quickly transitions to night, while the transition can take weeks near the poles.[27] The duration of twilight is longest the summer solstice and shortest near the equinoxes.[28] Moonlight, starlight, auriglow, and light pollution can dimly illuminate the nighttime, with their diffuse aspects being termed skyglow.[29][30] The amount of skyglow increases each year due to artificial lighting.[29] The Moon's phases at hourly intervals throughout 2020, as viewed from the Northern Hemisphere. Night exists on the other planets and moons in the Solar System.[9][10] The length of night is affected by the rotation period and orbital period of the celestial object.[31] The Moon's phases visible from Earth result from nightfall on the Moon.[32] The Moon has longer nights than Earth, lasting about two weeks.[31] This is half of the synodic lunar month, the time it takes the Moon to cycle through its phases.[33] The Moon is tidally locked to Earth; it rotates so that one side of the Moon always faces the Earth.[34] The side of the Moon facing away from Earth is called the near side of the Moon, and the side facing Earth is called the far side of the Moon. During lunar night on the near Earth, appears 50 times brighter than a full moon appears from Earth.[35] Because the Moon has no atmosphere, there is an abrupt transition from day to night without twilight.[36] Sunset on Mars Night varies from planet to planet within the Solar System. Mars's dusty atmosphere causes a lengthy twilight period. The refracted light ranges from purple to blue, often resulting in glowing noctilucent clouds.[37] Venus and Mercury have long nights because of their slow rotational periods.[38] The planet Venus rotates once every 243 Earth days.[39] Because of its unusual retrograde rotation, nights last just over 58 Earth days.[40] The dense greenhouse atmosphere on Venus keeps its surface hot enough to melt lead throughout the night.[41] Its planetary wind system, driven by solar heat, reverses direction from day to night. Venus's winds blow from the right side of the planet to the left side of the planet on the night side.[43][44] On Mercury, the planet closest to the Sun, the temperature drops by over 1,000 °F (538 °C) after nightfall.[45] The day-night cycle is one consideration for planetary habitability or the possibility of extraterrestrial life on distant exoplanets.[46] In general, shorter nights result in a higher equilibrium temperature for the planet.[47] On Earth-like planet, longer day-night cycles may increase habitability up to a point.[48] Computer models show that longer nights would affect Hadley circulation, resulting in a cooler, less cloudy planet.[49] Once the rotation of the planet slows beyond 1/16 that of Earth, the difference in day-to-night temperature shifts increases dramatically.[48] Some exoplanets, like those of TRAPPIST-1, are tidally locked. Tidally locked planets have equal rotation and orbital periods, so one side experiences constant day, and the other side constant night. In these situations, astrophysicists believe that life would most likely develop in the twilight zone between the day and night hemispheres.[50][51] The giant moray eel is most active by night. Its brain has adapted to rely less on visual input and more on its sense of smell.[52] Living organisms react directly to the darkness of night.[53] Light and darkness also affect circadian rhythms, the physical and mental changes that occur in a 24-hour cycle.[54] This daily cycle is regulated by an internal "biological clock" that is adjusted by exposure to light.[54] The length and timing of nighttime depend on location and time of year.[55] Organisms that are more active at night possess adaptations to the night's dimmer light, increased humidity, and lower temperatures.[56] Animals that are active primarily at night are called nocturnal and usually possess adaptations for night vision.[57] In vertebrates' eyes, two types of photoreceptor cells sense light:[58] Cone cells sense color but are ineffective in low light; rod cells sense only brightness but remain effective in very dim light.[59] The eyes of nocturnal animals have a greater percentage of rod cells.[58] In most mammals, rod cells contain densely packed DNA near the edge of the nucleus.[61] Nocturnal insects drawn to artificial light compound eyes of insects can see [process].111 Nocturnal insects navigate using moonlight, lunar phases, infrared vision, the position of the stars, and the Earth's magnetic field.[62] Artificial lighting disrupts the biorhythms of many animals.[63] Night-flying insects that use the moon for navigation are especially vulnerable to disorientation from increasing levels of artificial lighting.[64] Artificial lights attract many night-flying insects that die from exhaustion and nocturnal predators [65] Decreases in insect populations disrupt the overall ecosystem because their larvae are a key food source for smaller fish.[66] Dark-sky advocate Paul Bogard described the unnatural migration of night-flying insects from the unit Nevada desert into Las Vegas as "like sparkling confetti floating in the beam's white column".[67] Time-expended recording of a bat using echolocation to home in on its prey Some nocturnal animals have developed other senses to compensate for limited light. Many snakes have a pit organ that senses infrared light and enables them to detect heat. Nocturnal mice possess a vomeronasal organ that enhances their sense of smell. Bats heavily depend on echolocation.[68] Echolocation allows an animal to navigate with their sense of hearing by emitting sounds and listening for the time it takes them to bounce back.[68] Bats emit a steady stream of clicks while hunting insects and home in on prey as thin as human hair.[69] Fusell's "The Nightmare People" and other diurnal animals sleep primarily at night.[70] Humans, other mammals, and birds experience multiple stages of sleep visible via electroencephalography.[71] The stages of sleep are wakefulness, three stages of non-rapid eye movement (NREM), including deep sleep, and rapid eye movement (REM) sleep.[72] During REM sleep, dreams are more frequent and complex.[73] Studies show that some reptiles may also experience REM sleep.[74] During deep sleep, memories are consolidated into long-term memory.[75] Invertebrates most likely experience a form of sleep as well. Studies on bees, which have complex brain structures unrelated to vertebrate brains, have shown improvements in memory after sleep, similar to mammals.[76] Compared to waking life, dreams are sparse with limited sensory detail. Dreams are hallucinatory or bizarre, and they often have a narrative structure.[77] Many hypotheses exist to explain the function of dreams without a definitive answer.[77] Nightmares are dreams that cause distress. The word "night-mare" originally referred to nocturnal demons that were believed to assail sleeping dreamers, like the incubus (male) or succubus (female).[78] It was believed that the demons could sit upon a dreamer's chest to suffocate a victim, as depicted in John Henry Fusell's "The Nightmare".[78] An entomopathogenic fungus extends fruiting bodies from its host. Fungi can sense the presence and absence of light, and the nightly changes of most fungi growth and biological processes are direct responses to either darkness or falling temperatures.[55] By night, fungi are more engaged in synthesizing cellular components and increasing their biomass.[79] For example, fungi that prey on insects will infect the central nervous system of their prey, allowing the fungi to control the actions of the insect. During the late afternoon, the fungi will pilot their prey to higher elevations where wind currents can carry its spores further, and at night, will kill and digest the insect, extending fruiting bodies from the host's exoskeleton.[80] Most fungi do not have real circadian rhythms.[55] The bread mold Neurospora crassa is used to study biorhythms because it is one of the few species of fungi to rely on an internal clock rather than directly on environmental changes.[81] Time-lapse video of a night-blooming cereus. During the day, plants engage in photosynthesis and release carbon dioxide.[82] Plants can draw up more water after sunset, which facilitates new leaf growth.[83] As plants cannot create energy through photosynthesis after sunset, they use energy stored in the plant, typically as starch granules.[84] Plants will adjust their rate of consumption to match the expected time until sunrise. This avoids prematurely running out of leaf reserves.[84] It allows the plant to adjust for longer nights in the winter.[85] If a plant is subjected to artificially early darkness, it will ration its energy consumption to last until dawn.[85] Succulent plants, including cacti, have adapted to the limited water availability in arid environments like deserts.[86] The stomata of cacti do not open until night.[87] When the temperature drops, the pores open to allow the cacti to store carbon dioxide for photosynthesis the next day, a process known as CAM.[87][88] Cacti and night-blooming plants use CAM to store up to 99% of the carbon dioxide they use in daily photosynthesis.[89][90] Ceroid cacti often have flowers that bloom at night and fade before sunrise.[91] As few bees are nocturnal, night-flowering plants rely on other pollinators, including moths, beetles, and bats.[92] These flowers rely more on the pollinators' sense of smell, with strong perfumes to attract moths and foul-smelling odors to attract bats.[93] Eukaryotic and prokaryotic organisms that engage in photosynthesis are also affected by nightfall. Like plants, algae will switch to taking in oxygen and processing energy stored as starch.[94][95] Cyanobacteria switch from photosynthesis to nitrogen fixation after sunset.[96] They also absorb genetic material from their environment at a higher rate during the night.[97] An illustration from Horatio Alger's Tom Temple's Career shows a burglar using a "dark lantern", which shines in only one direction. Before the industrial era, night was a time of heightened insecurity.[98] Fear of the night was common but varied in intensity across cultures.[99] Some psychologists have concluded that prehistoric people feared real and tangible harms present during the night and that these concrete fears developed into a broader fear of night itself.[100] Dangers increased due to lower visibility. Injuries and deaths were caused by drowning and falling into pits, ditches, and shafts.[101] People were less able to evaluate others after dark.[102] Due to nocturnal alcohol consumption and the anonymity of darkness, quarrels were more likely to escalate to violence. For example, in medieval Stockholm, the majority of murders were committed while intoxicated.[103] Crime and fear of crime increased at night.[104] In pre-industrial Europe, criminals disguised themselves with hats, face paint, or cloaks. Thieves would trip pedestrians with ropes laid across streets and dismount horse riders using long poles extended from the roadside shadows. They used "dark lanterns" where light could be shined through a single side. Most nocturnal thieves worked alone; organized criminal gangs were uncommon except for burglary.[105] With members numbering into the dozens and hundreds, burglary rings hacked, cut, smashed, and burrowed into homes where residents were sleeping. They used a range of brutality to subdue and intimidate the residents, with the French chauffeurs infamously torturing victims with fire. With nothing comparable to a modern police force, these burglary gangs then escaped into the night, often disguised as demons, ghosts, or monsters.[106] Burglary rings also employed arson both to create distraction and to flush people from their locked homes.[107] Early sources of heat and illumination (such as chimneys, candles, and oil lamps) created inherent fire risks while families slept.[108] Additionally, bakers and brewers kept fire constantly burning near stacks of wood and charcoal.[109] Cities and towns regularly burned to the ground. One English town, Stratford-upon-Avon, was consumed by fire four times in five years.[110] The increased humidity of night was deemed the result of vapors and fumes.[111] The annual movements of stars and constellations across the night sky were used to track the passage of time.[112] But other changes in the night sky were interpreted as significant omens.[113] Many daytime religious, governmental, and local social controls dissipated after nightfall.[114] Fortified Christian communities announced the coming darkness with horns, church bells, or drums. This alerted residents—like peasants working in the fields—to return home before the city gates shut.[115] The English engaged in a daily process of "shutting in", where valuables were brought into homes before they were bolted, barred, locked, and shuttered.[116] Many English and European towns attempted to impose curfews during the medieval period and gradually loosened the restrictions via exceptions.[117] Prayer and folk magic were more common by night.[118] Amulets were hung to ward off nightmares, while charms were cast against thieves, and pig hearts were hung in chimneys to block demons from traveling down them.[119] The common phrase "good night" has been shortened from "God give you a good night".[118] In Ottoman Istanbul, the royal palaces shifted to projecting nocturnal power through large parties lit by lanterns, candles, and fireworks.[120] Though alcohol was forbidden for Muslims, after dark, Turkish Muslims went to bars and taverns beyond the Muslim areas.[121] The night has long been a time of increased sexual activity, especially in taboo forms such as premarital, extramarital, gay, and lesbian sex.[122] In colonial New England, courtship, young unmarried couples practiced bundling before marriage. 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