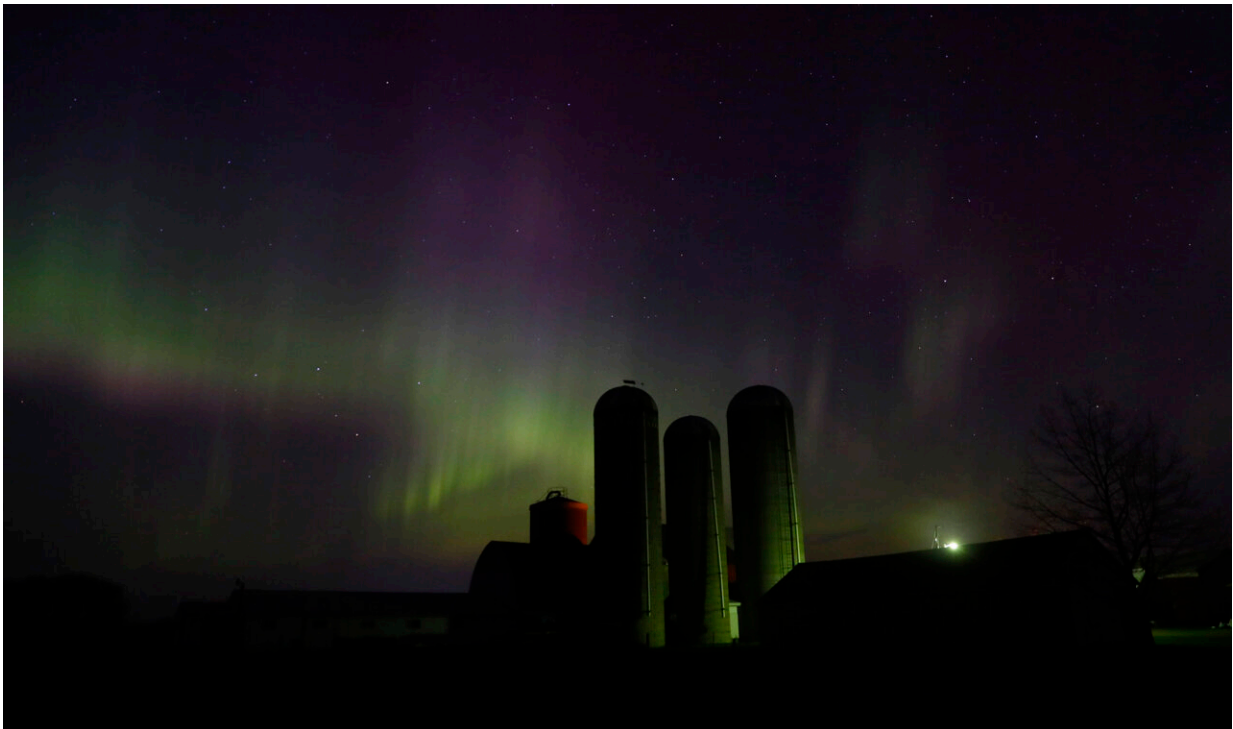


Severe solar storm creates dazzling auroras farther south

April 24 2023, by Marcia Dunn



The northern lights are seen over a farm near Pulaski, Wis., on Sunday, April 23, 2023. An intense solar storm has the aurora borealis gracing the skies farther south than usual. Credit: Sarah Kloepping/The Post-Crescent via AP

An intense solar storm has the northern lights gracing the skies farther south than usual. A blast of superhot material from the sun late last week hurled scorching gases known as plasma toward Earth at nearly 2 million

mph (3 million kph), the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration said Monday.

Earth felt the brunt of the storm Sunday, according to NOAA, with forecasters warning operators of power plants and spacecraft of the potential for disruption.

Auroras were reported across parts of Europe and Asia. In the U.S., skygazers took in the sights from Wisconsin, Washington state, Colorado, California, New Mexico and even Arizona—mostly a reddish glow instead of the typical green shimmer.

"I don't want any expectations of these green curtains moving back and forth" so far south, said Bill Murtagh, program coordinator at the NOAA Space Weather Prediction Center in Boulder, Colorado.

Although conditions have eased, auroras might still be visible as far south as South Dakota and Iowa late Monday and early Tuesday if skies are dark.

The farther north, the better the show as the energized particles interact with the atmosphere closer to Earth, according to Murtagh. The farther south, the curvature of the Earth cuts off the most dazzling scenes as the particles interact higher in the atmosphere.

Murtagh said light pollution in Boulder prevented him from seeing the auroras Sunday night. But there could be more opportunities as the solar cycle ramps up.



An aurora borealis, also known as the northern lights, is seen in the night sky in the early morning hours of Monday, April 24, 2023, near Washtucna, Wash. An intense solar storm has the aurora borealis gracing the skies farther south than usual. Credit: AP Photo/Ted S. Warren



A woman watches northern lights (aurora borealis) over the village of Podolye, Russia, 70 kilometers (43 miles) east of St. Petersburg, on Sunday, April 23, 2023. Credit: AP Photo/Dmitri Lovetsky



An aurora borealis, also known as the northern lights, is seen in the night sky in the early morning hours of Monday, April 24, 2023, near Washtucna, Wash. Credit: AP Photo/Ted S. Warren



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"Stay tuned, more to come," he said.

This was the third severe geomagnetic storm since the current 11-year solar cycle began in 2019, according to NOAA. The agency expects the cycle to peak in 2024.

For those down under, the southern lights should provide equally good shows, Murtagh said.

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