

The watch You Can't Have ...Yet

An inventor's idea pinpoints twilight times for any location

BY DANIEL B. ENGLAND

John Rosevere and one version of his Skyclock, which will tell you exactly when the sun will rise and set.

This is a story about a watch that doesn't exist. "Ceci n'est pas une pipe" the surrealist artist René Magritte once famously penned beneath his picture of what was pretty clearly a pipe. "Of course it is not a pipe," he said. "Just try to fill it with tobacco."

John Rosevere, 73, is not a surrealist but he can see the watch that doesn't exist so clearly in his head that for him it might just as well be on his wrist. It is as real as the sun, something that Rosevere thinks about day and night. The result of all of this pondering about where the sun is relative to the earth has resulted in Skyclock, an ingenious invention that everyone from painters to fishermen to golfers and even submarine captains might like to know about.

Skyclock is essentially the information about sunrise, sunset and twilight that can be found in the tables published by the U.S. Naval Observatory, among others. It is a clock, to be sure. When you tell it your longitude and latitude, its dial will tell you exactly when the sun will rise and set.

When set to the 12-hour mode (there is a 24-hour setting if you prefer) the clock will tell the time, but more than that it will indicate when darkness ends and twilight begins. So for example, if you are in Ann

By using the calendar feature of Skyclock, you can figure out when twilight has or will occur on any date you choose



Arbor, Michigan, where Rosevere lives, and it is 2:09 p.m. on September 21, 2009, the clock will tell you that the sun will set and twilight will begin at 7:33 p.m. (More on twilight in a moment.)

However, if you are in Fairfield, Connecticut, where *International Watch* is published, even though it is in the same time zone as Ann Arbor, the sun will set at 6:51 p.m. If you're, say, a vampire, knowing when twilight begins can be extremely important in gaining maximum time for finding a suitable victim and doing that thing with blood that vampires do.

But if you do find yourself in

vampire mode, as it were, you had better bone up on your twilight—or have a Skyclock nearby. Twilight is, of course, that part of the day that is the transition between day and night when there is visible light after sunset and before sunrise. Got it?

Not so fast. Turns out there are three twilights. There is Civil Twilight, when the sun is between 1 and 6 degrees below the horizon (the standard twilight) and there is Nautical Twilight, when the sun is between 6 and 12 degrees below the horizon—sailors take note.

And then there is Astronomical Twilight, when the sun is between 12

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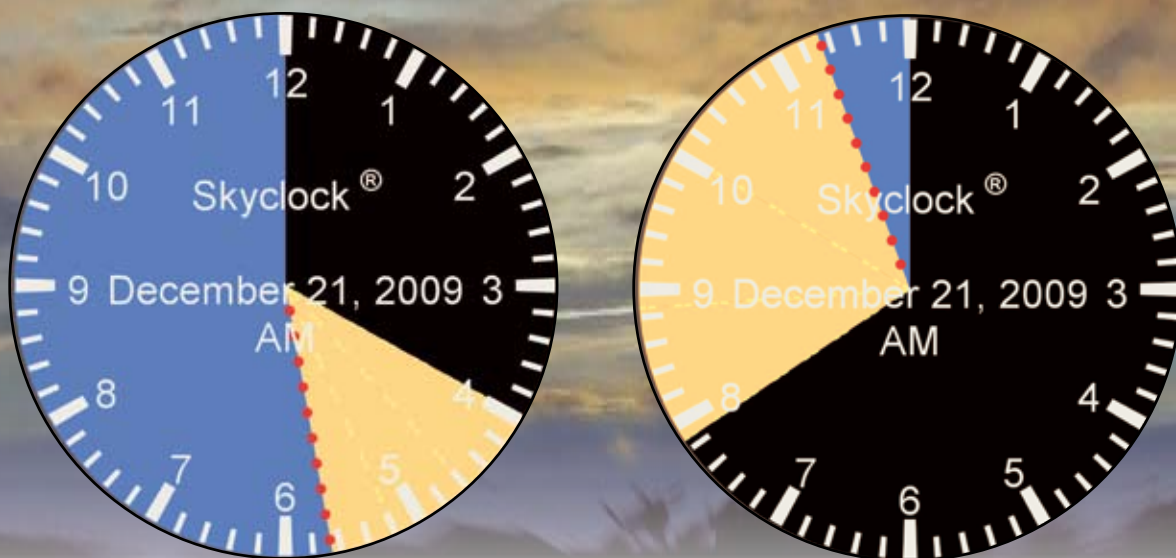
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In 12-hour-mode, the dial will show blue (indicating day) from midnight until twilight begins. Twilight (that is Common Twilight) is highlighted in orange and after twilight ends, black indicates night.



and 18 degrees below the horizon. But most people would simply turn to the astronomer and say, “Look, you knucklehead, it’s dark!”

Three definitions

Skyclock takes into account all three definitions of twilight but does so sensibly. For the purposes of the dial display, in our example above, twilight starts at sunset, in the case of Ann Arbor, 7:33 p.m. Civil Twilight begins then and goes until 8:01, when Nautical Twilight begins and goes until 8:34 p.m., when Astronomical Twilight begins and goes until it is good and dark at 9:08 p.m.

Skyclock shows you all three, but it highlights what the Skyclock people call Common Twilight, that is, the combination of Civil and Nautical Twilight, which is what most people refer to when they are talking about twilight. It’s when you have trouble seeing where your golf drive has gone.

By using the calendar feature of Skyclock, you can figure out when twilight has or will occur on any date you choose, handy if you’re going fishing in a week or if you’re a detective trying to determine just how good a look a witness got of the burglar at 9 o’clock on the evening of the crime.

If you’re in 12-hour-mode, the dial will show blue (indicating day) from midnight until twilight begins. Twilight (that is Common Twilight) is highlighted in orange and after twilight ends, black indicates night.

This all takes a little getting used to but once you get the hang of it, it makes perfect sense. The 24-hour mode works much the same way and will seem familiar to those who think in military time.

In an extreme setting, such as McMurdo Station, Antarctica, the dial can sometimes show nothing but day and sometimes nothing but night and twilight. Apparently, you can even experience a sunset after midnight there. Weird.

Patented Technology

The patented technology, according to Rosevere’s business partner, Rob Baxtresser, “takes into account a lot of astronomical anomalies that must be factored into a complex series of place-specific algorithms.”

You can order Skyclock for your computer from www.Skyclock.com (there is also a free version with fewer functions). A wall version, if there were one, would be great for your submarine or bait and tackle shop. If there were an app for Skyclock,

its information would be as handy as your iPhone. Rosevere says that the iPhone application would not be difficult but it has yet to be developed.

On the wrist?

But the holy grail for Rosevere and Skyclock is a watch version. So far, this quest has been maddeningly elusive for the inventor. He has contacted companies such as Suunto, which already makes a watch with GPS capability—and Garmin, also GPS experts, but none has shown interest in partnering with Skyclock company.

“I have danced and put on the pony show,” he said in a recent interview with the *Bay City Times* (April 1, 2006) “but nobody ever got out their checkbook. I am an obsessed man but I’m not insane.”

For the moment, however, Rosevere will tell anyone who will listen about the Skyclock watch he carries around in his head. Whether versions of it will someday sit on the wrists of many who have a need to keep track of light will perhaps depend on a reader of this magazine.

Media can be persuasive. After all, you were interested enough to read an entire article about a watch that doesn’t yet exist. ☺