

# Was the Planet of the Apes all monkey business?

When producer Arthur P. Jacobs approached 20th Century Fox executives in 1966 about a science-fiction movie featuring talking apes, the immediate concern was how could they avoid it being taken for a comedy?

Based on the 1963 French novel by Pierre Boulle named *La Planète des singes*, it was a paradigm shift for the entertainment industry.

While the movie featured famous stars Charlton Heston, Roddy McDowell, Maurice Evans and Kim Hunter, and a script written by paranormal legend Rod Serling, it still made investors nervous with a budget of just under \$6 million.

Marketed as "*Beyond your wildest dreams*," it opened in the winter of 1968 grossing over \$32 million while spawning of one of the biggest sci-fi franchises in the world. After half a century, it is still well received by critics and fans.

The original movie highlighted astronaut George Taylor, played by Heston, arriving 2,000 years into a future Earth inhabited by speaking apes dominating mute humans. Needless to say, this was a culture shock to Taylor and his two colleagues determined to get to the bottom of it.

Long story short, the apes capture Taylor and discover he can not only talk but is also more intelligent than imagined.

Dr. Zaius, played by Evans, was not only minister of science but also of faith which indoctrinated the population that a supreme



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The Sky's the Limit

ape created all. Taylor called his bluff and exposed Zaius's 900-year-old ancestral fraud by visiting forbidden archeology sites proving humans were there before apes.

Check out <https://www.bfi.org.uk/news-opinion/news-bfi/features/planet-apes-sci-fi-charlton-heston> for a recent article called *50 years of Planet of the Apes: why the original series still holds a warning for us all*. Truth is stranger than fiction!

## Sky watch

The Draconids meteor shower peaks Monday, Oct. 8. It's best seen after twilight, facing north, high up. While not as dramatic as other showers, it can occasionally spew hundreds an hour. The new moon will be a bonus for a dark sky.

Did you catch the Zodiacal Light last month? It's a faint, roughly triangular, whitish glow seen in the night sky extended up from the vicinity of the sun along the ecliptic or

zodiac. The best time is from Saturday, Oct. 13 for two weeks, before dawn, in the east.

Catch the peak of the Orionids meteor shower on Sunday, Oct. 21, for one to two hours before dawn. Look just to the north of constellation Orion's bright star, Betelgeuse, to find the meteor shower. With the second-fastest entry velocity of the annual showers, at 10-20 per hour, meteors from the Orionids produce yellow and green colours and have been known to produce an odd fireball, but will be limited with the near full moon. With only one day after the new moon, there will be no moonlight.

On Tuesday, Oct. 30, look southwest-west after sunset until 7 p.m. to see Mercury and Jupiter set into the horizon.

## Public events

Mark down Saturday, Oct. 13, from 8-11 p.m., for sci-fi night at the monthly open house at the Rothney Observatory near Priddis. There will be an array of scopes operated by University of Calgary astronomers and members of the RASC Calgary. That night, Saturn can be found in the western sky in the constellation Sagittarius, and it will be followed by Mars. Cygnus the Swan will be flying straight overhead with its thousands of exoplanets. The entrance fee \$30 per car. For further information, contact Jennifer Howse at [jhowse@phas.ucalgary.ca](mailto:jhowse@phas.ucalgary.ca) or 403-931-2366. The website [www.ucalgary.ca/rao/](http://www.ucalgary.ca/rao/) is updated regularly.

*Neel Roberts welcomes your questions and comments at 403-560-6574.*