

Friday the 13th in the sky?

If someone wishes you "Happy Friggatriskaid-ekaphobia," you'd naturally look at that person as if he or she came from space.

But the fear of Friday the 13th interestingly enough has some of its origins in the cosmos.

The current solar calendar has 365.25 days in a year compared to the 29.5-day cycle of the moon.

Therefore, every two to three years we see 13 full moons compared to the normal 12.

Christian monks planned their festivals around the monthly moon cycle. But they considered an extra moon in the year unlucky since it upset the normal plans.

Thus the number 13 became traditionally unlucky.



Neel Roberts
The Sky's the Limit

Sky watch for the next month

Right after supper on Thursday, Sept. 19 at 7:15 p.m. in the northeast-east, watch the legendary harvest moon rise. In the days before electricity, farmers counted on the lamp of the harvest moon to gather their crops and even in the today's harvest, it's a nice bonus considering it stays up all night.

On Saturday, Sept. 8 after 8:30 p.m. in the southwest-west, Venus

will be horizontally next to the moon while Saturn is on until they all set by nightfall.

The fall equinox officially arrives Sunday, Sept. 22, at 1:44 p.m.

The Zodiacal Light is a faint, roughly triangular, whitish glow seen in the night sky extended up from the vicinity of the sun along the ecliptic or zodiac. It's trying to find, and the best time to locate it in the next two weeks is in the morning twilight.

Public events for the next month

Join us Friday, Sept. 13 at 7:30 p.m. for our regular meeting. A short indoor presentation is followed by outside observing.

The topic will be "Friday the 13th and the cosmos."

This will be followed by

stargazing (weather pending) through our 11-inch telescope.

Experts are on hand every second Friday evening of the month to explain the heavens, teach telescoping skills and help you develop your knowledge of our sky.

For further information, contact the Trek Station at 403-485-2994 or visit the website www.vulcantourism.com.

Neel Roberts is a member of the Calgary chapter of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada—the nation's leading astronomy club founded in 1849 with over 4,000 members and 29 centers across Canada. Neel welcomes your questions and comments at 403-485-2683 and Neel_Roberts@ptccanada.com.