

Perseids meteor shower a grand opportunity to shoot shooting stars

Technology is making the stargazer's life easier, even when there are objects that can be seen by the naked eye that maybe too swift to spot.

This year's near full moon will reduce the visibility of the expected 60-100 meteors per hour during the Perseids peak, which takes place Wednesday, Aug. 13. Since 2008, NASA has used a network of cameras across the United States set up especially to photograph the streaking fireballs, which are quick for the eye to capture.

The streaks become obvious once the glowing Double Cluster in Perseus clears the horizon at about 11 p.m. and ascends into the night sky.

Some Roman Catholics refer to the Perseids as the "tears of St. Lawrence," since Aug. 10 is the date of his martyrdom.

Break out the chairs any time after nightfall and set your view to look between the radiant, which will be in the northeast part of



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The Sky's the Limit

the sky and the zenith, the point in the sky directly above you.

The celestial event is the result of comet 109P/Swift-Tuttle trailing debris, which has been seen for more than two millennia and was last observed in 1992. But it's not scheduled to return until 2126, so don't hold your breath.

The Perseids is a backyard success because the weather is still warm, mosquitos are mostly gone and people can also see the meteor shower without telescopes or astronomical apparatus.

Sky watch for the next month

The waxing moon will be near Mars and Saturn on the Sunday, Aug. 31

Labour Day long weekend. Just after sunset, look to the south-southwest — those two bright objects near the moon are Saturn and Mars, which will set by 11 p.m. in the southwest-west.

Venus and Jupiter will be near the M44 Beehive Cluster on Tuesday, Aug. 19 before dawn. Look northeast-east at 5 a.m. as these three rise with the sun.

This is an excellent month to view the Milky Way's brilliance without freezing. The best time is after 11 p.m. until dawn.

The annual Perseids meteor shower's peak starts Monday, Aug. 11 and continues until Wednesday, Aug. 13 with an estimated rate of 60-100 meteors per hour.

The best time to view starts at 11 p.m. facing the northeast in the constellation of Perseus (www.skymaps.com has free star charts that will help you find it) until dawn.

For more information, check out www.chiff.com/science/perseids.htm,

which has a complete video guide.

Public events for the next month

The monthly Friday night stargazing session at the Vulcan Tourism and Trek Station takes place Aug. 8 starting at 7:30 p.m., so mark it on your calendar and join us.

We will try and show you the rings of Saturn during daylight followed by a short indoor presentation on the cosmos, weather pending.

Experts are on hand at the monthly stargazing sessions to explain the heavens, teach telescoping skills and help people develop their knowledge of our sky.

For more information, contact Vulcan Tourism at 403-485-2994 or visit www.vulcantourism.com.

Happy meteor shower viewing and keep reaching for the sky!

Neel Roberts welcomes your questions and comments at 403-485-2683 and Neel_Roberts@ptccanada.com.