

Moonless sky makes for excellent summer meteor shower

The annual Perseids Meteor Shower is a summer sensation and perhaps the most beloved, regular astronomical event of the year in the Northern Hemisphere. This year, the slender waning crescent moon rising at or near dawn will not obtrude on this year's shower with expected 60-100 meteors per hours during the peak of Wednesday, August 12th. The celestial event has gained popularity in recent years considering it's been around seen since the time of Christ tracing its origins from the oriental Far East. Some Roman Catholics refer to the Perseids as the "tears of St. Lawrence", since August the 10th is the date of that his death.

Plan observing any time after nightfall and best bet is to look in the north-east part of the sky and the zenith, the point in sky directly above you. The shower event is the result of comet 109P/Swift-Tuttle trailing debris which has been seen since BC and



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The Sky's the Limit

last observed in 1992 but unfortunately not scheduled to return until 2126. The Perseids is a backyard success because not only is the weather still warm and mosquitos mostly gone but requires no equipment like telescopes or astronomical apparatus unless you want to start your astrophotography hobby. Also, have the gang over for a Star B Q and enjoy the display with some warm drinks, friends and food.

Sky watch for the next month:

Quarter Moon near Saturn- Saturday, August 22nd after sunset in SSW these

two bright objects easy to find since their close but will set by midnight 23:00 in the SWW.

Mars in the M44 Beehive Cluster- Thursday, August 20th before dawn, look NEE at 05:00 am as these 2 rises above the sun.

Milky Way Brilliance- This is an excellent month to view our home galaxy without freezing. Best time is after 11:00 pm until dawn.

Annual Perseids Meteor Shower- Peak starts Tuesday August 11th to Thursday August 13th with estimated rate of 60-100 meteors per hour. Best view is starting at 11:00 pm facing the NE in the constellation of Perseas (www.skymaps.com has free star charts which will help you find it) until dawn. For further information check out <http://www.chiff.com/science/perseids.htm> which has a complete video guide.

Public Events for the next month:

Monthly Friday night stargazing at the Trek Center- Mark down Friday, August 14th at 19:30 on your calendar and join us at the Trek Center for our monthly Star Gazing. We will try and show you the rings of Saturn during daylight (yes, this is possible with the scope we have!) followed by a short indoor presentation on the cosmos, weather pending. Experts on hand the 2nd Friday monthly at 19:30 to explain the heavens, teach scoping skills and help you develop your knowledge of our sky. For further information, contact the Trek Center at (403) 485-2994 and the website www.vulcantourism.com will be updated regularly. Happy meteor shower viewing and keep reaching for the Sky!

Neel Roberts is a member of the Calgary chapter of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada-the nation's leading astronomy club.