

# Spooky nebulas a Halloween delight

What do cats, skulls, ghosts and witches have in common? They all have nebulas named after them.

While you would have thought it's somehow hooked into Halloween, these jewels of the universe are there all year around. Three-thousand light years away the Cat's Eye is a dying star that throws off shells of glowing gas while the Cat's Paw is a vast region of cosmic dust about 5,500 light years from Earth in the constellation of Scorpius 50 light years across. The Screaming Skull looks like a giant screaming head with flaming hair, streaking across the Milky Way 45,000 light years away while the Skull Nebula is 1,600 light years away in the constellation of Cetus. The Ghost Head Nebula is in the Large Magellanic Cloud, a satellite galaxy of our own Milky Way.

The 900 light year Witch's



**Neel Roberts**

The Sky's the Limit

Nebula is a gas cloud illuminated by nearby supergiant star Rigel in Orion while the 1,470 light year Witch's Broom is part of the Veil Nebula, a cloud of heated and ionized gas and dust in the constellation Cygnus.

Oh yes, there are also wizards, eyes, hands, owls and even a tarantula nebula to scare you!

### **Sky watch**

On Friday, Oct. 7 the Draconid meteor shower is best seen after twilight facing north high up. While not as dramatic as other showers, it can occasionally

spew hundreds of meteors an hour but will be reduced visibility by the waxing, crescent moon.

On Thursday, Oct. 15, starting at dawn before 7:30 a.m., Mercury will be right angled to the rising sun.

On Saturday, Oct. 21 for one to two hours before dawn the Orionids meteor shower peaks just to the north of the constellation Orion's bright star Betelgeuse. 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. With the waning gibbous moon glare will reduce visibility.

### **Public events**

Have you checked out our monthly public stargazing at the Trek Station this year at all?

We've had a great year so far, so don't hesitate to get

involved. We'll talk about October meteor showers and more on Friday, Oct. 14 starting at 7:30 p.m.

A short indoor presentation will be followed by stargazing through our 11-inch telescope, weather pending.

Refreshments are provided free of charge, and are all welcome.

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

For further information, contact Vulcan Tourism at 403-485-2994 and the website [www.vulcantourism.com](http://www.vulcantourism.com).

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