

# 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, Aug. 12.

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 Aug. 10 is the date of that his death.



Visitors from Gravelbourg, Sask. enthusiastically point out the sky while Karl Iverson Jr. scope it out on the 11-inch Celestron and Dave Watterson of Calgary on his binoculars.

Plan observing any time after nightfall and best bet is to look in the northeast 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 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 mosquitoes mostly gone, but requires no equipment such as 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:**

- Annual Perseids Meteor Shower — Peak starts Tuesday, Aug. 11 to Thursday, Aug. 13 with estimated rate of 60-100 meteors per hour. Best view is starting at 11 p.m. facing the northeast in the constellation of Perseas ([www.skymaps.com](http://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.
- Mars in the M44 Beehive Cluster — Thursday, Aug. 20 before dawn, look NEE at 5 a.m. as these two rise above the sun.
- Quarter Moon near Saturn — Saturday, Aug. 22 after sunset in SSW these two bright objects easy to find since their close, but will set by midnight (11 p.m.) in the SWW.
- Milky Way Brilliance — This is an excellent month to view our home galaxy without freezing. Best time is after 11 p.m. until dawn.

#### **Public Events for the next month:**

Monthly Friday night stargazing at Vulcan's Trek



Photos by Neel Roberts

**Roland Deschene explains how Iridium Flares work to a captive audience in the Trek Center's bridge.**

Center. Mark down Friday, Aug. 14 at 7:30 p.m. 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 second Friday monthly at 7:30 p.m. 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](http://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 founded in 1849 with more than 4,000 members and 28 centres across Canada. Neel welcomes your questions and comments at 403-560-6574 or e-mail: [Neel\\_Roberts@ptccanada.com](mailto:Neel_Roberts@ptccanada.com). The members meet once a month at the Trek Center in Vulcan the second Friday evening at 7:30 p.m. and you can check them out at <http://calgary.rasc.ca/vulcan2015.htm>.*