Jupiter starts 2007 in the morning sky, rising in the east-southeast around 4:30 a.m. It rises about four minutes earlier each day, however, so it ever-so-gradually will begin to appear at more convenient hours: rising around midnight (local daylight time) by mid April and around the end of evening twilight by mid May. It will arrive at opposition on June 5, and then will be a prominent evening object for the rest of the year. Unfortunately, it will spend much of the year in the Scorpius-Ophiuchus region of the sky, not far from the ruddy star Antares, which means it will not get very high up for those living north of latitude 45-degrees north.

Saturn will be in prime position for evening viewing during the winter and early spring months, sedately shining like a very bright, but not dazzling, yellowish-white zero-magnitude "star" in Leo, the Lion. By mid-April it is already past the meridian as darkness falls, and during July it gradually becomes swallowed up by the evening twilight glow. It reappears in the eastern morning sky by mid-September. Brilliant Venus pays Saturn a visit twice in 2007, the first in the July evening sky and the second in the October morning sky. The famous ring system is visible in small telescopes magnifying 30-power or more, but their inclination toward Earth diminishes quite noticeably, especially later in the year.

METEOR SHOWERS

The peak of the annual performance of the famous Perseid Meteor Shower very nearly coincides with a New Moon late on the night of Aug. 12-13, which will make for excellent observing conditions for viewing meteors at rates of 50 to 100 per hour.

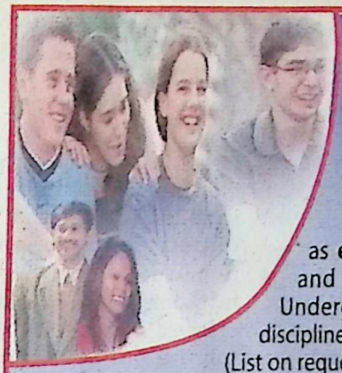
Astronomer Peter Jenniskens at NASA/Ames Research Center is predicting an outburst of bright meteors on the morning of Sept. 1, for those living in western North America. Unfortunately, a bright gibbous Moon will be in the sky, but hourly rates might possibly be in the tens to hundreds.

The December Geminidswhich many now consider to be the best display of the yearoccurs in 2007 when the Moon is a waxing crescent and sets early in the evening, meaning excellent viewing conditions for the nights of Dec. 13 and 14, when 60 to 120 meteors per hour may be seen.

ECLIPSES

There will be two total lunar eclipses in 2007. The first is on March 3rd. Europe and Africa are in prime position to see it, though parts of eastern and central North America will get a view of it as the Moon rises that evening. The other total eclipse comes on Aug. 28, and will favor the Pacific Rim. Western and central North America will be able to see it much of it just prior to moonset; eastern North America's view will be interrupted by the setting Moon. A partial eclipse of the Sun occurs on March 19th for eastern Asia; from parts of Alaska, the opening stages of this eclipse might be glimpsed just before sunset on the evening of the 18th. On Sept. 11 another partial solar eclipse will take place.

Source: Space.com



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