

Friday the 13th meteor shower

Do you suffer from “Paraskavedekatriaphobia”? I guess I better tell you what is to see if you got it, then you can practise pronouncing it. It simply means the fear of “Friday the 13th” or if that’s not technical enough try “Friggatriskaidekaphobia”. Now that I got your attention, if you actually have these Halloween like fears, I’m going to suggest you put it aside unless you want to miss one of the best meteor showers ever. Friday, August the 13th, will be the peak day for one of the optimum annual sky shows.

This year promises to be one of the better ones according to the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) with the four day waxing moon disappearing by 10 p.m., the peak darkness and celestial down pour coincidentally kicks in at the same time for the rest of the evening. The cosmic event is the result of comet 109P/Swift-Tuttle trailing debris that has been seen since BC and last observed in 1992 but not scheduled to return until 2126, so don’t hold your breath. Unlike



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The Sky's the Limit

other showers, this one is such a bonus, not only because it happens in the summer but requires no equipment like telescopes or astronomical apparatus. Just look heavenward and enjoy the show with some warm bevies and friends.

Sky watch for the next month

There will be a triple planet conjunction with the Moon. Just before the meteor shower starts Aug. 13, the crescent moon will set with Mars, Venus and Saturn in the south-southwest all at the same time.

Neptune will be visible, with a scope or good binos, all month starting in the east-southeast and setting in the west-southwest by dawn. The best view will be on the Aug. 20 when it is closest to Earth.

This is an excellent month to view our home galaxy, the Milky Way, without freezing. Best time is after 11 p.m. until dawn.

The annual Perseids Meteor Shower will start to peak on Aug. 12-14 with an estimated rate of about 50 meteors per hour. The best view is starting at 11 p.m. facing the northeast in the constellation of Perseus (www.skymaps.com has free star charts which will help you find it) until dawn. For further information check out <http://www.nasa.gov/topics/solarsystem/features/neo20100407b.html> or Google “Perseids Shower 2010”.

Public Events for the next month

The Royal Astronomical Society of Canada-Calgary (RASC) is hosting an astronomy weekend in the natural dark sky preserves of Cypress Hills Park (www.cypresshills.com) Alberta side on Aug. 6-7. There is no charge for this themed weekend and all are welcome. For further information contact the

RASC president Roland Dechesne (403)510-4330, Roland.Dechesne@cnrl.com, <http://astronomycalgary.com/events/info/235>.

A Community Star B Q and Summer Meteor Shower Party, hosted by the E-Free Church in Champion, takes places Aug. 13 starting at 9 p.m. Following the Star B Q is a short presentation from RASC and then it’s time to watch the meteor shower for the rest of the night. Warm clothing with bug spray and comfortable, reclining chair strongly recommended. Great family, free event and all welcome. For further information contact Tim Hill, (403)897-3760, efcchamp@wildroseinternet.ca. Rumour has it that Jason guy from Hollywood may show up, but not sure if it’s the Voorhees one!

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