

Fall meteor shower welcomes moonlight madness

Moonlight madness already has a home-grown reputation in small towns like ours but many overlook the more popular universal event that happens around the same time.

While you maybe scooping Christmas bargains and pumping up the local economy, the heavens are warming up the sky with at least one cosmic happening.

The annual Leonids meteor shower is the most popular fall celestial event because unless it snows and clouds every day of the night, you're bound to at least catch a few streaks after dinner or before breakfast in mid-November.

The Northern Taurids is a more mediocre shower that occurs earlier in the month because it's not as obvious to catch.

Both events originate as the result of the Earth passing through clouds left behind by comet debris the size of sand grains.

The result is a streaking glow as the minute rubble breaks up in the Earth's atmosphere producing the flashes easily visible by the naked eye.

Ambitious astro-photographers will try and



Neel Roberts
The Sky's the Limit

capture some of the better ones, and if that happens to be you, be sure to submit it to the [www.space.com](http://www.space.com/gallery) gallery (http://www.space.com/scienceastronomy/astronomy/leonids_photographing.html). Once the world's No. 1 astronomy news resource publishes your name and pictures, invite them down for moonlight madness Vulcan style.

Sky watch for the next month

The daylight's savings time ends and the new moon begins on Nov. 7. You'll get that hour of sleep back while the moon enters into its waxing crescent setting in the southwest around 6:30 p.m.

Don't miss the Venus and Saturn morning show. With the moon being out of the way Nov. 18, look at the east-east south horizon and Venus will be rising around

5:30 a.m. while Saturn has already been up two hours about 14 degrees up in Virgo constellation.

The Leonid meteor shower peaks on Nov. 17 looking towards the constellation of Leo. Originating from the comet 55P/Tempel-Tuttle, it should produce meteors at the rate of 15 per hour.

The bonus northern Taurids meteor shower peaks on Nov. 12. It's a rare month to have two meteor showers in a row, but look towards the constellation of Taurus to see about seven meteors per hour on Nov. 12. The showers are also known as "Halloween Fireballs" because they are usually more prominent around that time.

Public events for the next month

The Saturday Observer's Night and Binocular Star Walk, hosted by the All Star Telescope (<http://www.all-startelescope.com/>) just outside Didsbury, takes place Nov. 6, from 6 p.m. until midnight. This full facility telescope dealer has a heated showroom, with refreshments and washrooms, and everything is provided for no charge. I am planning to attend,

and you are welcome to caravan with a group I am assembling leaving Vulcan. There will be a bonus PowerPoint presentation by professional eclipse chaser Murray Paulson.

For further information contact Ken From at 866-310-8844, or go to <http://www.all-startelescope.com/index.php/Binocular-Star-Walk.html>.

The Community Star-B-Q and Fall Meteor Shower Party, which is hosted by the E-Free Church in Champion and is dependent on the weather, takes place Nov. 17 starting at 7 p.m. with a Star-B-Q, followed by a short presentation from RASC and meteor shower watching the rest of the night. Warm clothing and a reclining chair are strongly recommended. It's a great free family event. For further information phone Tim Hill at 403-897-3760, or email him at efcchamp@wildroseinternet.ca.

Happy cooler days and meteor watching!

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.