

Meteors falling this fall

If you've already started your Christmas shopping, look towards the heavens several times this month for a break between stores. November will feature two meteor showers within the span of a week around the middle of the month. The latter Leonids meteor shower coming Nov. 17 has produced some of the greatest meteor storms in history. One back in 1966 produced rates as high as many thousands of meteors per hour. On that evening, observers commented that the meteors did fall like rain and even felt as if they needed to grip the ground. These torrential celestial downpours occur in cycles every 33 years, according to experts. This year, the waxing moon will set early, leaving a dark sky for the show. The Northern Taurids taking place earlier on Nov. 11-12 is nowhere as dramatic with about seven expected per hour. However, the dark skies we will have after its peak at 1 a.m. will help observers



Neel Roberts
The Sky's the Limit

see a few steaks into the dawn, given that the moon will also set during the show. Whether you're shopping or hanging out on the farm or streets, these shows are a treat, as bright fireballs streak across the clear sky!

Sky watch for the next month

Daylight Savings Time ends on the same day as a waxing moon on Sunday, Nov. 4. You'll get that hour of sleep back while the moon enters its 19th day of a waning gibbous phase. A penumbral lunar eclipse will occur just after 6 a.m. on the morning of Wednesday, Nov. 28 until about 8:30 a.m., just before it sets. Leonid meteor shower peaks on Saturday, Nov.

17 after night fall until dawn, looking towards the constellation of Leo. Originating from the comet 55P/Tempel-Tuttle, it should produce meteors at the rate of 10-15 per hour. It's a rare month to have two meteor showers in a row, but on Sunday, Nov. 11 and Monday, Nov. 12, look towards the constellation of Taurus for about seven meteors per hour after midnight. The Windfall Northern Taurids Meteor Shower is also known as "Halloween Fireballs" because the meteor shower is usually more prominent around that time.

Public events for the next month

Monthly public stargazing at the Trek Station takes place Friday, Nov. 9, starting at 7:30 p.m. A short indoor presentation is followed by stargazing through an 11-inch telescope. Treats and refreshments are provided free of charge, and all are welcome. For further information, contact

Vulcan Tourism staff at 403-485-2994.

The Observer's Night is being hosted by All Star Telescope just outside Didsbury on Saturday, Nov. 17, from 7 p.m. until midnight. There's a heated showroom with washrooms, and refreshments are free. I am planning to attend, and you are welcome to caravan with a group I am assembling. We leave Vulcan at about 3:30 p.m. weather permitting. We stop for a Chinese buffet before heading to the farm for the evening, and we stop at Tim Hortons on the way back. For further information, contact Ken From at 866-310-8844 or go to <http://www.allstartelescope.com/pages/observer-nights>.

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, Neel_Roberts@ptccanada.com.