

Northern lights moving southbound?

A recent Columbia University study suggests a weakening magnetic pole might be pushing the famous Arctic Aurora Borealis sky show closer to the US/Canada border.

Dennis Kent from Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory claims the planet's magnetic field is down 10 per cent over the last 20 years, according to a recent BBC interview.

This is wonderful news and a great start to the new year for us at this latitude, considering the bulk of the Canadian population is close to the 49th parallel.

While we do not have the six months of near darkness to enjoy it like they do, the warmer weather gives us the advantage to stay outside longer with darkness all



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The Sky's the Limit

year round. Kent confirms we can expect more auras appearing in lower latitude regions.

On the opposite side of the planet, the southern lights, or Aurora Australis, could be in the same boat with theirs crawling north. Evidence of this shift has become plain in places like Ottawa, which experienced frequent occurrences in recent years. Time will tell if this is the

real deal.

Sky watch

Just before dawn on Friday, Jan. 8 you can catch Venus and Saturn rising in the southeast-east for the next few days with the naked eye.

Look at the moon on Tuesday, Jan. 19 at 7 p.m. as Aldebaran, the brightest star in the constellation Taurus, will hide behind it for about an hour.

Public events

Check out our first stargazing event for 2015, which also happens to be on Friday, Jan. 8, courtesy of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada (Calgary) starting at 7:30 p.m.

A brief indoor presentation will be followed by stargazing with an 11-inch

telescope and binoculars outside (weather permitting).

Experts are on hand the second Friday of each month, beginning at 7:30 p.m., to explain the heavens, teach telescoping skills and help you develop your knowledge of our sky.

All are welcome to this free event. Refreshments are provided.

For further information, contact Vulcan Tourism at 403-485-2994 or visit the website www.vulcantourism.com.

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.