

How appropriate that love can be seen in the sky

Can you be a romantic on a moonless night?

Whether you have a scope or not, a dark night can be a great opportunity to show off the sky on the day dedicated to lovers.

The Valentine Star better known as Betelgeuse is an easy find.

The constellation of Orion is a prominent winter object and his armpit is where you'll find this. Reputed as being on the verge of going super nova, we have no idea when the grand day is, so we may be the last generation that'll enjoy this celestial sight.

The Nebula, 1805, on the other hand is much more stable, but requires a good scope. At 7,500 light years away from earth, it's located in the Perseus Arm of the Galaxy in the constellation Cassiopeia. This is an emission nebula of glowing red gas and darker dust lanes. Its brightest part is the knot at the right classified separately classified as NGC 896, since it was the first part of this nebula to be discovered.

Lastly, with that same scope, try and find the recent heart-shaped landscape on Pluto. You're a total genius if your successful considering it took a century and spacecraft for NASA to even discover it was there.

• Sky watch for the next month:

• Five Planet and Moon Bonanza — Look S.E. Saturday, Feb. 6, before sunrise as the thin crescent moon is surrounded by Venus, Pluto and Mercury while Saturn and Mars are 45 degrees up towards the south.

• Neptune/Solar conjunction — At sunrise Sunday, Feb. 28 you can spot Neptune using a solar filter rising just below the sun. Never do this without the proper protection.

• Betelgeuse — the Valentine's star is visible Valentine's Day, Sunday, Feb. 14 starting in the S.E. sky from dusk until setting in the west after 3 a.m. Impress your date by showing them the easy to find red pulsating star which is Orion's shoulder.

• Zodiacal Light — is a faint, roughly triangular, whitish glow seen in the night sky extended up from



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the vicinity of the sun along the ecliptic or zodiac. Discovered by the astronomer Giovanni Domenico Cassini in 1683 and later explained by Nicolas Fatio de Duillier in 1684, it's difficult to find and the best time is from Wednesday, Feb. 24 for two weeks in the northwest after evening.

Public event for the next month:

Monthly Public Stargazing at the Trek Center. Join us Friday, Feb. 12 and learn about the Valentine's Star Betelgeuse and more courtesy of the RASC (Calgary) starting at 7:30 p.m. Brief indoor presentation followed by stargazing by the 11-inch telescope

and binocular outside (weather permitting). All welcome, no charge and refreshments provided. Experts are on hand the second Friday monthly at 7:30 p.m. to explain the heavens, teach scoping skills and help you develop your knowledge of our sky. For further information, contact the Trek Center at 403-485-2994. The website www.vulcantourism.com will be updated regularly.

Happy Valentine's Day and stargazing.

Neel Roberts is a member of the Calgary chapter of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada (RASC)-the nation's leading astronomy club founded in 1849 with more than 5,000 members and 28 centers across Canada. Neel welcomes your questions and comments at 403-560-6574 or email Neel_Roberts@ptccanada.com. The members meet the second Friday monthly at the Trek Center in Vulcan and you can check them out at: <http://calgary.rasc.ca/vulcan2016.htm>.



Dave Watterson of Calgary peers through the 11-inch Celestron scope while Maggie Sevilla and Roland Dechesne point out celestial objects.



Photos by Neel Roberts
Many youths entice their parents to bring them down to the Trek center so they can learn the sky, sometimes for the first time. Below, a local dog decides to join the meeting and is greeted by Maggie Sevilla of Calgary.