

Curious Cats make cool constellations

As cooler weather comes to us in fall, the skies have some “cool” celestial objects to match.

Venture out about 6,000 light years in the constellation of Scorpius and you’ll find the “Cat’s Paw Nebula-NGC 6543, also known as the Bear Claw Nebula and Gum 64.

Closer to home, at about three light years out, is The Cat’s Eye Nebula or NGC 6543 in the northern constellation of Draco.

Back to Earth, we can clearly see the constellation of Leo dominating high in the southern sky with its six-star reverse question mark or signature sickle forming the head. All these can be seen this time of year for most of the night, but a good telescope is needed the



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The Sky’s the Limit

first two.

Sky watch

This Thursday, look east from 5:40 a.m. until dawn for Venus and Mars.

This Saturday is the peak of the Draconid meteor shower. It’s best seen after twilight facing north, high up. While not as dramatic as other showers, it can occasionally spew hundreds an hour. The waning gibbous moon will rise during the early evening, so there will be very little moon-free time.

From Tuesday, Oct. 17 for two weeks before dawn, in the east, is the best time to see the zodiacal light — a faint, roughly triangular, whitish glow seen in the night sky extending from the vicinity of the sun along the ecliptic or zodiac.

On Friday, Oct. 20, watch for the peak of the Orionids meteor shower. It peaks for one to two hours before dawn just to the north of constellation Orion’s bright star, Betelgeuse. After this meteor shower’s peak takes place only one day after a new moon, there will be no moonlight.

Public events

Mark down Saturday, Oct. 21 from 8-11 p.m. on your calendar for the monthly open house at the Rothney Observatory near Priddis.

There will be an array of scopes operated by

University of Calgary astronomers and members of the Calgary chapter of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada. You will have the opportunity to look through the telescopes, and astronomers will be on hand to answer questions. That night, Andromeda will be found near the heart of the winged horse Pegasus in the northern sky.

To attend, the entrance fee is \$30 per car. For further information, contact Jennifer Howse at jhowse@phas.ucalgary.ca or 403-931-2366. Visit www.ucalgary.ca/rao for more information.

Neel Roberts is a member of the Calgary chapter of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada. Neel welcomes your questions and comments at 403-560-6574 and Neel_Roberts@ptccanada.com.