

NYAA STARGAZING NEWS DECEMBER, 2009-JANUARY 2010

PLANETS

MERCURY	now visible after sunset. Hanging around until Dec. 27 th , but low this apparition
VENUS	visible in the east before sunrise until Dec. 14.
EARTH	look down, visible all this month. Earth is the only planet visible all year.
MARS	rises at 9:22:56 tonight, and is getting closer and larger each night. Will grow to 12.7" at month's end, and 14.1" at the end of January. It's good for imaging now.
JUPITER	evenings until around 10 PM, earlier each night, setting in the evening by late Jan.
SATURN	Now high enough for telescopic observing before dawn.
URANUS/NEPTUNE	both still visible in binoculars or small telescopes
PLUTO	fagittaboutit

DECEMBER

8	last qtr Moon
10	Moon 8 deg south of Saturn
13/14	Gemidid Meteor Shower. Peaks around midnight, could be up to 120/hour. Radiating from Gemini, but can appear in any part of the sky.
16	New Moon
18	Dusk, thin crescent Moon 6 or 7 deg north of Mercury. Binos best.
19	Jupiter passes .6 deg south of Neptune at midnight.
19-23	Mercury at its highest this month, around 8 deg half hour after sunset
21	10 AM Moon passes 4 deg north of Neptune & Jupiter 11 AM Mars stationary 12:47 Winter Solstice
23	Moon 6 deg north of Uranus
22	Ursid meteor shower. Around 10 to as high 50 per hour. Radiant near Kochab in Ursa Minoris, and peaks before dawn.
24	first qtr Moon
28	Moon covers part of Pleiades, 7-10 PM
31	"Blue Moon", 2 nd full Moon this month at 2:13 PM. Partial Lunar eclipse in parts of Europe, Africa and Asia.

JANUARY

- 2-4 Quadrantid meteor shower, but strong Moonlight
- 2 Earth reaches perihelion, its closes approach to the Sun
- 7 Last qtr Moon
- 8 Predawn, Saturn's rings tilted at 4.9 deg, widest they appear until August 2010.
- 11 Dawn, waning crescent Moon occults Antares around sunrise.
- 13 Dawn, thin crescent Moon 5 or 6 deg right of Mercury very low in the south-east
½ hour before sunrise. Use binos.
- 15 New Moon. Annular Solar eclipse in Africa and China.
- 16-29 Mercury very good around 45 minutes before sunrise.
- 17 Crescent Moon 5 deg from Jupiter in the west-southwest as twilight fades
- 23 1st qtr Moon
- 27 Mars closest to Earth.
- 29 Mars at opposition, near Moon moon.

Andromeda is at its best for the year, almost directly overhead. Also look for companions M32 and M110.

Auriga's open star clusters, M36, M37, and M38 easily visible in binos or small scopes. Also a number of other cluster and asturisms. See page 44 of January's Sky & Tel for details.

Get out and look at the sky, day and night. Also, a number of interesting optical effects (pillars, "rainbows", etc.) are often visible in the cold weather, so it's always good to be prepared with a small camera or binos near at hand.

Clear Skies,

John Merchant