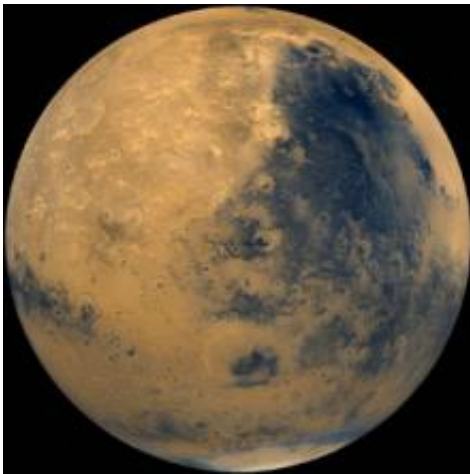


STAR TRAK for November: Mars is prominent again

November 2 2009



Mars. Image: NASA

(PhysOrg.com) -- Pumpkin-colored Mars will return to prominence during November, rising shortly before midnight at the beginning of the month and more than two hours earlier by month's end. The orange planet will brighten noticeably as it passes the stars of the Beehive cluster. Mars will be highest in the south around the start of morning twilight, the best time for viewing it with a telescope.

Jupiter will be easy to see in the south as night falls in November. Observe this bright planet with a telescope as early in the evening as you can while it is still high, before our turbulent atmosphere begins to obscure its detail. Jupiter will set around midnight early in the month and

two hours earlier at month's end. Its four brightest moons will still be visible with binoculars.

Saturn will rise well after midnight during November and be highest in the east-southeast at the start of dawn. Saturn's rings are opening rapidly after being almost edgewise as seen from Earth, but a telescope will show them still looking more like a narrow bar than a ring system.

Venus will rise in the east-southeast later each night, becoming harder to find in the bright morning twilight. By month's end it will rise less than an hour before the sun.

Mercury will be out of sight during November as it passes behind the sun.

Meteor showers

The annual Leonid [meteor shower](#) will peak on the night of Nov. 17-18, just one day after new moon. If the weather cooperates, the absence of moonlight will make for ideal viewing conditions, and you may see as many as 100 meteors per hour in a clear dark sky. The Leonid meteors appear to radiate from the constellation Leo the Lion. They are actually caused by streams of fast-moving dust particles from Comet Tempel-Tuttle.

Watch for meteors after midnight local time as sickle-shaped Leo gets higher in the east. The farther Leo climbs above the horizon, the more meteors there will be all over the sky. The bright star Regulus is part of Leo and can serve as a marker for the radiant, the point from which the meteors appear to come.

Another meteor shower, the Southern Taurids, will peak before dawn on Nov. 5. These meteors will seem to come from the constellation Taurus

the Bull, whose bright orange star Aldebaran is easy to spot. Watch to the west between midnight and dawn.

More information about meteor showers is available from the American Meteor Society at: www.amsmeteors.org/showers.html .

Light pollution

Satellite imagery showing the extent of light pollution can be viewed at earth.google.com , which has a free program called Google Earth that can be downloaded. You can locate patches of darker sky nearest your home, as well as the roads to reach them.

Moon phases

The [moon](#) will be full on Nov. 2, at third quarter on Nov. 9, new on Nov. 16 and at first quarter on Nov. 24.

Provided by

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