

Meteor shower likely to be good, won't be eclipsed by moon

August 11 2015, by Seth Borenstein



Stars seen as streaks from a long camera exposure are seen behind Arnotegui Hermitage, in Obanos, northern Spain, Tuesday, Aug. 11, 2015. The meteor shower is expected to peak Wednesday night into Thursday morning. (AP Photo/Alvaro Barrientos)

People looking for a shooting star to wish upon may find Wednesday overnight to be a dream come true.

Celestial timing will help people see more of the oldest meteor shower known to Earth, the Perseids, when they peak 3 a.m. local Thursday, according to astronomers.

That's "because the moon is almost new and there's no moonlight to mess with the show," said NASA meteor expert Bill Cooke. The last time the Perseids (pur-SEE'-uhdz) peaked with little moonlight was 2007.

If the weather is good, expect one shooting star a minute, maybe more, said Cooke.

The skies will be clear for an unusually large section of the United States, said Weather Underground meteorology director Jeff Masters. Much of the East, Midwest and far West will be almost cloudless. But the forecast isn't as nice for Florida, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Arizona, Utah and Idaho.

The sky show is pieces of comet Swift-Tuttle hitting Earth's atmosphere at more than 133,000 mph and burning up. The best way to watch is to lie down and look up—no telescopes needed.

Meteor showers just touch people in a special way, said planetary scientist Sheila Kanani of the Royal Astronomical Society in London.

"For a lot of people, it's a make-a-wish kind of mentality," Kanani said. "There's something quite romantic about a meteor shower."

If your skies aren't clear or there's too much light, NASA is broadcasting the Perseids from 10 p.m. until 2 a.m. EDT with Cooke and other experts explaining what's happening in the skies.

More information: NASA: www.nasa.gov

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