

Geminids meteor shower peaks this week under dark skies

December 13 2023, by Marcia Dunn



The Geminid meteor shower lights up the night sky above Tybee Island, Ga., early Thursday, Dec. 14, 2017. The year's best meteor shower, the Geminids, peaks this week, with lucky stargazers seeing as many as one or even two a minute in the darkest spots. The meteors will reach their frenzy Thursday, Dec. 14, 2023. Credit: Will Peebles/Savannah Morning News via AP, File

The year's best meteor shower, the Geminids, peaks this week. Skygazers may see as many as one or even two a minute streaking across dark skies.

The meteors will reach their frenzy Thursday. But Wednesday night should provide a cosmic spectacle as well.

This week's new moon will make for prime viewing anywhere in the world where skies are clear and in spots without light pollution.

NASA urged observers to look everywhere in the sky since meteors don't come from any particular direction. Between 60 and 120 meteors are expected every hour at peak time, weather permitting.

NASA meteoroid expert Bill Cooke said he loves that the Geminids have a greenish hue as they speed across the sky and burn up. Most meteors appear to be colorless or white depending on their chemical makeup. Green usually comes from oxygen, magnesium and nickel.

Most meteor showers originate from comets. But the Geminids come from the sun-orbiting asteroid 3200 Phaethon. Either way, when Earth passes through these leftover bits of comets or asteroids, the fragments encounter Earth's atmosphere and put on quite the show.

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