The 2004 Perseid Meteor Shower is Promising to Be Unusually Good

August 10 2004

The annual Perseid meteor shower is coming, and forecasters say it could be unusually good. The shower begins, gently, in mid-July when Earth enters the outskirts of a cloud of debris from Comet Swift-Tuttle. Dust-sized meteoroids hitting the atmosphere will streak across the night sky, at first only a sprinkling, just a few each night, but the rate will build.

By August 12th when the shower peaks, sky watchers can expect to see dozens, possibly even hundreds, of meteors per hour.

If predictions are correct, Earth will plow through the filament on Wednesday, August 11th at 2100 UT (5 p.m. EDT). This will produce a surge of mostly-faint meteors over Europe and Asia. Observers might see "as many as 200 meteors per hour," says Cooke, who recommends getting away from city lights to watch the flurry.

Later that night, observers in North America can see the "traditional Perseid peak" caused by the older dust from Swift-Tuttle.

The best time to look for these "traditional Perseids" is during the hours before dawn on Thursday, August 12th. Set your alarm for 2 o'clock in the morning; go outside; lie down on a sleeping bag with your toes pointed northeast. You'll soon see meteors racing along the Milky Way.

More information here.

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