

Northern Berkshire Astronomical Society

Founded 2023 | North Adams Public Library | North Adams, MA

This Month

Planets return and the first meteor shower of the season.

The Moon

-  - Dec 1
-  - Dec 8
-  - Dec 15: "Cold" Moon
-  - Dec 22

Planets

Mercury: evening twilight

Venus: SW after sunset

Mars: rises ~9PM - Cnc

Jupiter: rises ~6PM - Tau

Saturn: sets after 12AM - Aqr

Uranus: up all night - Tau

Neptune: sets 2AM - Psc

Deep Sky Objects

Easy (binoculars): M 36, M 37, M 38, Pleiades, Double Cluster

Moderate (small telescopes): M 1, NGC 2024, Uranus

Challenges: NGC 151, C 56, M 77, NGC 864, NGC 925



Venus and the Moon

The Moon passes close to Venus in the Southwest on the evening of Dec. 4th. (the chart is for 6PM, local time), separated by 3° . What's interesting to see is the different phases of the two objects: while the Moon is still a thin crescent, Venus is still in a Gibbous phase (it'll slowly shrink to *dichotomy* - when it is a "half Venus" - at the beginning of 2025).

Meteor Showers

The Gemini's peak on Dec. 13, but the presence of the nearby Full Moon (in Gemini) will be poor seeing. However, the shower trails off a few days before and after this date, so seeing some of the brighter meteors might be possible while avoiding the Moon's glare.



This Month's Image

There are several interesting galaxies in the Fall sky, in Pisces, Cetus, and Aries. NGC 660 has wide open arms, with a barred center, and dust lanes. Its shape might come from either the merger of two galaxies, or by taking on mass from a close encounter, pulling out the spiral arms from the disk.

Interacting

Check out our Facebook Group

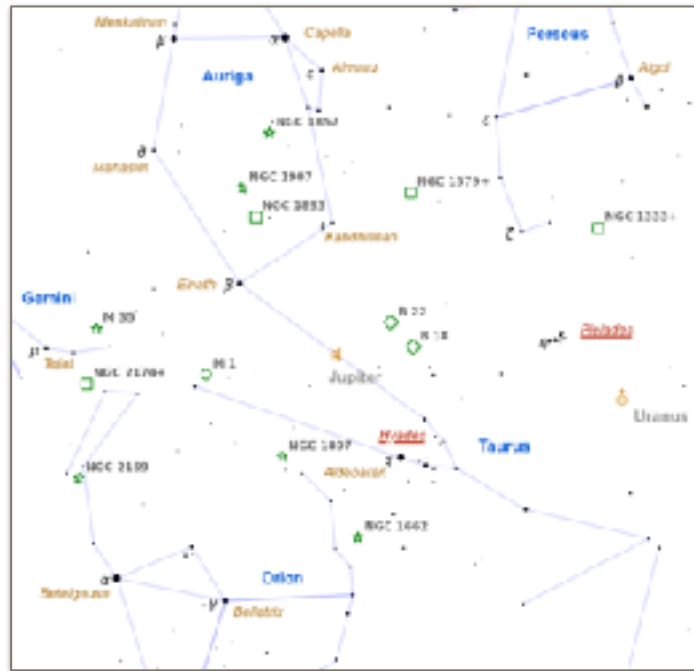
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/nberkastro>

and join us at our next meeting: Jan 8th (*note the shift in date, as the NAPL is closed on New Year's Day*) at 6 PM at the North Adams Public Library.

Next Month

We dive into Orion, and examine Mars!

Scanning around Taurus



This month, we're in the neighborhood of Taurus. First, we have planets Jupiter which dominates the sky and Uranus, visible in binoculars. The Hyades and Pleiades clusters are marked, along with the proper names of several of the brighter stars. Starting in Auriga and working our way South through Taurus and just touching the top of Orion, Perseus, and Auriga we can find:

- The pentagon of Auriga has many different open clusters: the three well-known Messier clusters (36, 37, and 38) were in last month's map; this month, we add NGC 1857 and NGC 1907, plus NGC 1893 "the Letter Y cluster" which also has significant nebulosity. M 35 and nearby NGC 2157 in Gemini are good to compare: one is younger, the other older - you might detect the overall color difference in the stars.
- In Orion NGC 1807/1817 are "the Poor Man's Double Cluster"; NGC 2169 is "the 37 Cluster" and why is very apparent when you look at it. Challenges for small scopes are the nebulae: M 1 (of course) and the Monkey Head (NGC 2174), Embryo (NGC 1333) and Northern Trifid (NGC 1579).
- Finally, two dark nebulae: Kutner's Cloud (Barnard 18) and the Taurus Dark Cloud (Barnard 22). Here, we're looking for the *absence* of something (stars) caused by foreground dust eclipsing the background Milky Way.