

Northern Berkshire Astronomical Society

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

This Month

Venus and Jupiter! Meteors!

The Moon

-  - May 2: Pink Moon
-  - May 9
-  - May 16
-  - May 23
-  - May 31: "Blue" Moon

Planets

- Mercury: behind the Sun
- Venus: in Tau, sets ~10:30 PM
- Mars: in Psc, rises early AM
- Jupiter: in Gem, sets ~12 AM
- Saturn: in Cet, rises early AM
- Uranus: in Tau, behind the Sun
- Neptune: in Psc, rises early AM

Deep Sky Objects

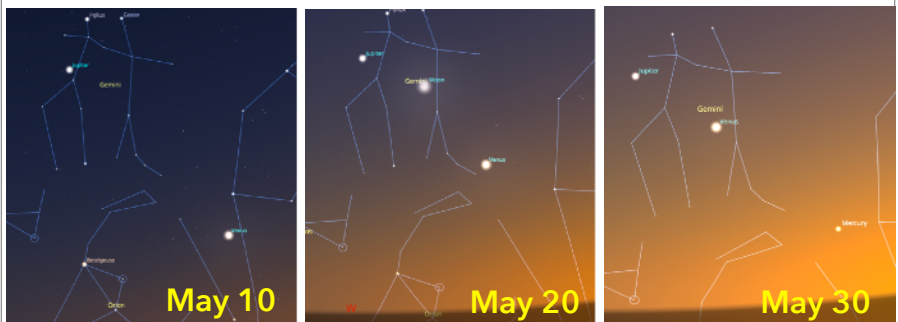
- Easy** (binoculars): M 44, Coma star cluster (Mel 111)
- Moderate** (small telescopes): Leo Triplet, M81/82, M 51, NGC 2903
- Challenges**: M 101, C 60/61, C 59

Bright Planet Encounter

Venus has been creeping up higher and higher this year in the West after sunset. This month, it starts to get closer to Jupiter, which has been sinking lower and lower.

The two planets will be closest in the sky (a conjunction) on June 9th, only 1.6° apart! But for now leading up to that, you can watch them inch closer and closer together. The challenge is that sunsets (and the end of astronomical twilight) are also getting later, so you might have to sneak a peek before it's completely dark.

Date	Sunset	Twilight End	Jupiter Set	Venus Set	Sep.
May 10	8:02 PM	10:00 PM	12:37 AM	10:37 PM	30°
May 20	8:13 PM	10:14 PM	12:07 AM	10:52 PM	20°
May 30	8:22 PM	10:30 PM	11:39 PM	11:03 PM	10°
June 8	8:28 PM	10:41 PM	11:01 PM	11:07 PM	1.5°



Late in the month (and into June), Mercury also comes up over the western horizon (briefly - it reaches maximum altitude on the 10th). So that's an extra "challenge" to try.



This Month's Image

Sometimes just seeing *anything* on the image is the challenge! Here, that very dim misty "patch" is the elusive target of the Leo I Galaxy, so tenuous that it wasn't even discovered until 1950! It's a member of the Local Group, and at a distance of 780 kly (about 1/3rd of the way to Andromeda, though in the opposite direction) might be one of the most-distant satellites of our Galaxy. Aside from it being large and very dim, it's also a challenge because it's located only 12' from the 1st magnitude star Regulus (whose glare can be seen in the lower-right of the image).

Interacting

Check out our Facebook Group

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

and join us at our next meeting:

May 6th at 6 PM at the North Adams Public Library

Website

<https://www.nbasastro.org>

Articles and MORE for the NBAS!

Spring Meteor Showers



Two meteor showers in May!

The Eta (η) Aquarids

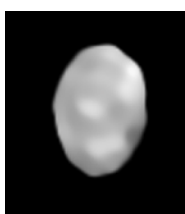
This is the meteor shower associated with Halley's Comet. It's the third

strongest annual meteor shower, and has observations of outbursts going back almost 2000 years.

The peak is around May 5th, but you'll see meteors from this shower broadly from mid-to-late April all through May, which a rate of about 1 per minute (it can be twice that some years). Unfortunately this year the peak happens just after Full Moon, and the radiant doesn't rise until the early AM hours, so for most of May you'll have to contend with the Moon getting in the way.

The Eta (η) Lyrids

Not to be confused with the April Lyrids, this is a minor shower, but at least the radiant is over the horizon in the mid-to-late evening. The rate is low - only about 4 per hour.



Psyche Probe Reaches Mars

What makes Psyche an interesting asteroid is that it's the largest metallic asteroid (and in the top 20 overall), about 223 km in diameter (really it's egg-shaped 278 x 232 x 164 km), orbiting the Sun in almost exactly 5 years. It's massive enough (1% of the entire asteroid belt) to perturb the orbits of other asteroids, with a density above average compared to other asteroids.

Launched in October 2023, the spacecraft is getting a gravity assist from Mars in May, giving it the boost it needs to get out to the asteroid belt. It will arrive in 2029 and spend several months in orbit around the asteroid, mapping it in three-dimensions.