

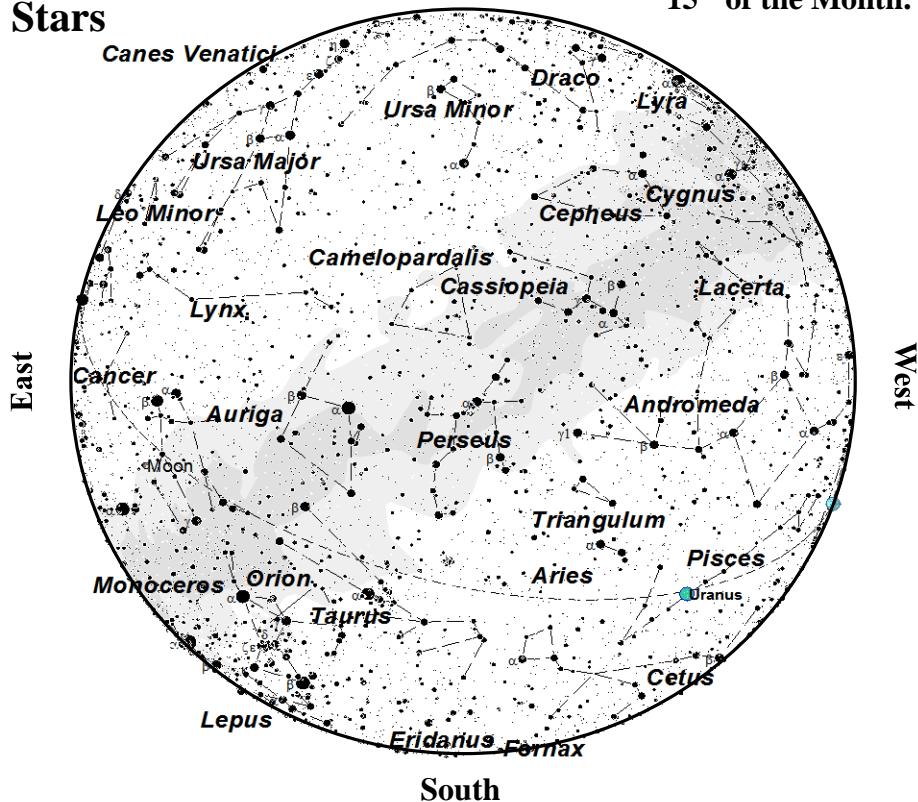
EAGLES EYE ON THE SKY – DECEMBER 2016

Dave Eagle's monthly sky guide.

This Months Stars

North

22:00 hrs
15th of the Month.



Overhead at the time of our map are the constellations of Perseus and Auriga. The bright yellow star Capella dominates. Close to Capella lies the asterism of “The Kids”, a small triangle of stars. Below Auriga is Taurus with its wonderful open clusters, The Seven Sisters, or Pleiades and the “V”-shaped Hyades. The bright red star Aldebaran “The Red Eye of the Bull” lying halfway between us and the cluster. Orion is now well away from the horizon. Can you see the hare crouching beneath his feet? You should be able to see Sirius twinkling many colours over on the south eastern sky, an effect caused purely by our own turbulent atmosphere as it is a white star. In the western sky, the head of Pegasus is getting close to the horizon. Cygnus is standing on its head as it flies down towards the north west. The Little Bear, Ursa Minor, hangs directly down from Polaris, and The Plough now standing straight up balanced on its “handle”. In the east, the head of Leo, the Lion is just poking its head above the horizon.

THE MOON

First Qtr. – 7th.

Full – 14th.

Last Qtr. – 21st.

New – 29th.

Crescent Moon visible:

1st, 2nd, 30th & 31st. - W evening Sky.

26th & 27th. – E morning sky.

The Moon will be close to:

Venus on the 3rd.

Mars on the 4th & 5th.

Neptune on the 6th.

Uranus on the 9th.

Hyades on the 12th / 13th(Occultation).

Vesta on the 16th.

Regulus on the 18th.

Jupiter on the 22nd & 23rd.

Saturn on the 27th (Very difficult).

THE SOLAR SYSTEM

MERCURY – Moves away from the Sun reaching greatest eastern elongation on the 11th. It will be difficult to spot very low in the south western sky after sunset.

VENUS – Gets a little bit higher in the south western sky just after sunset. Approaches Mars throughout the month.

MARS – Still outpacing the Sun just after sunset in the south western sky. Its small disk and low altitude makes it a challenge to view its surface details.

JUPITER – Now visible in the pre-dawn south western sky amongst the stars of Virgo. Magnitude a very bright – 1.36.

SATURN – Only just creeping out into the morning eastern twilight. It will be very challenging to spot, so leave this for next month.

URANUS – Visible in the eastern sky throughout the night in the constellation of Pisces. At magnitude 6 it requires binoculars or a small telescope to identify properly. Use a fairly high power eyepiece and you may be able to view the small pale green-blue disk. Very close to the 5th magnitude double star Zeta Piscium.

NEPTUNE – Sitting in the constellation of Aquarius this 7.6 magnitude ice giant requires a telescope to identify and you need a very high power to see the small green-blue disk. Its low altitude makes it difficult to spot. Mars approaches it throughout the month.

GEMINIDS. – This shower put on a great show last year. Most active on the evening of the 13th, but the almost full Moon will interfere.

COMET 45P Honda-Mrkos-Pajdusakova – Reaches maximum brightness late December / Early January. Although it should be a binocular object it stays very low in the sky, passing close to Mars on the 11th & 12th of the month as it heads northwards.

COMET 2016 U1 NEOWISE – Starts the month very close to M51 in Canes Venatici. Very faint to start, but will brighten as it approaches perihelion in January. Passes through Corona Borealis mid-month, but is heading south as it brightens.

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