OUTDOORS

CALL OF THE WILD

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Venus and Jupiter shine bright

BY DEANE MORRISON
University of Minnesota

It's no accident that holidays featuring lights are celebrated in December. This month Venus and Jupiter—and possibly one comet—crank up the wattage for us.

In early December, Venus shines as bright as it ever gets. Hanging like a lantern over the sunset horizon, our brilliant sister planet begins the month as a thick crescent, its face about 30 percent lit. By the end of the month, the crescent has lengthened considerably and thinned to a mere 5 percent of the planet's disk. These changes happen because Venus is circling in for its next pass in front of the sun; soon it will drop from the evening sky.

Over in the east, Jupiter, in Gemini, rises almost three hours after sunset on the 1st, but cuts the interval to about 20 minutes by month's end. Its giant globe out-radiates all the bright winter stars in its neighborhood, including Sirius, the brightest of all.

Morning viewers can watch Saturn angling its way ever higher above the eastern horizon. Look to the upper right of Saturn for the bright star Spica, in Virgo, and again to the upper right for Mars. The Red Planet approaches Spica all month long and will be high in the south at dawn.

On the 1st, a waning crescent moon rises between Saturn and low, fast-dropping Mercury. After the new moon on the 2nd, our faithful satellite reappears in the evening sky and glides by Venus on the 5th. On the 18th, a large but waning moon rises near Jupiter, and on the 29th a waning crescent is back below Saturn. But this time Mercury is gone—all the way to the other side of the sun.

December's full moon, known to Algonquin Indians as the cold moon or the long nights moon, is the most distant full moon of the year. Fullness occurs at 3:28 a.m. CST on the 17th. The moon vaults extremely high across the sky that night for the simple reason that when we're near the winter solstice, our patch of the planet tilts away from the sun and, therefore, toward the full moon, which is opposite the sun.

The solstice occurs at 11:11 a.m. CST on the 21st. At that moment the sun reaches its southernmost point, over the Tropic of Capricorn. By then, due to irregularities in Earth's orbit, sunsets will already have started getting later, and it won't be long before we begin to notice the days lengthening again.

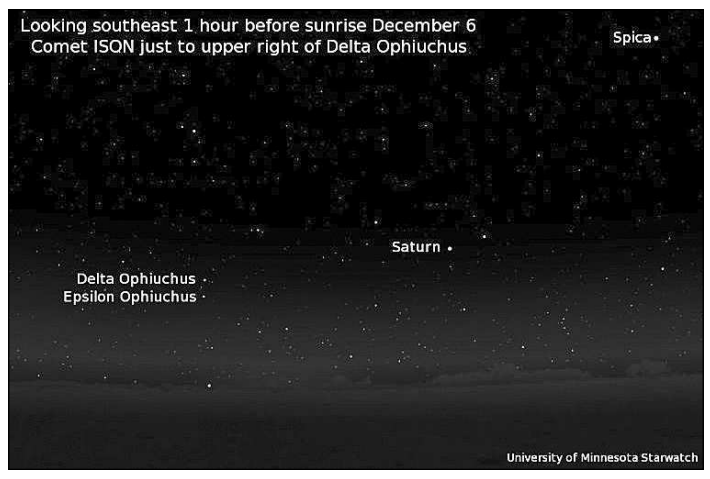
And we may just be treated to a holiday show by Comet ISON.

Don't bet on it, though. As famed comet hunter David H. Levy puts it, "Comets are like cats; they have tails, and they do precisely what they want."

ISON, discovered last year, zipped around the sun on Thanksgiving and follows a steep northward trajectory on the return part of its journey. That's assuming, of course, it has survived the intense tidal forces trying to rip it apart as it skirted the sun. If it's bright enough to see, it will come into view in both the morning and evening skies. Because it moves so fast, you may need a finder chart to spot it.

But if you look about 45 minutes before sunrise on the 6th, you can use a pair of closely spaced stars to find its position. First find Spica, well up in the southeast, then look down and to the left for Saturn. Look left again, and slightly down, to see two closely spaced stars—one above the other—in the constellation Ophiuchus, the snake handler. They are Delta Ophiuchus and Epsilon Ophiuchus. Delta's the one on top.

ISON will be just to the upper right of Delta. The comet's tail will point away from the sun as the solar wind (a fast stream of particles from the sun) blows cometary dust and gas away from ISON's nucleus. University of Minnesota astrophysicists are among the many worldwide who are studying this comet, using big telescopes in Hawaii and Arizona.



Comet Ison makes an appearance.

ISON moves farther to our upper left each morning as it speeds away from us. It passes closest to Earth on the 26th, when it will be just shy of 40 million miles away. After that it will be goodbye, for good.

Comets may forsake us, but at least the stars and planets are perennial.

The University of Minnesota offers public viewings of the night sky at its Duluth and Twin Cities campuses. For more information and viewing schedules, see:

■ Duluth, Marshall W. Alworth Planetarium: www.d.umn.edu/planet

■ Twin Cities, Minnesota Institute for Astrophysics (during fall and spring semesters):www.astro.umn.edu/outreach/pubnight

■ Check out the astronomy programs at the University of Minnesota's Bell Museum ExploraDome: www.bellmuseum.umn.edu/ForGroups/ExploraDome/index.htm

■ Find U of M astronomers and links to the world of astronomy athttp://www.astro.umn.edu.

CONSERVATION OFFICER WEEKLY REPORT

11-25-2013

District 5 — Eveleth area

CO Darrin Kittelson (International Falls) reports the 2013 firearms deer season came to a close with people making the same bad decisions as they started the season. Enforcement action was taken for transporting loaded firearm, discharge firearm from road right of way, trespass, and failure to validate site tag. On the bright side there were no reported hunting accidents or injuries in the border country.

CO Troy Fondie (Orr) completed work on storing watercraft, checked public access sites, drove forest roads, returned phone calls, and worked on the computer.

CO Dan Starr (Tower) worked deer season issues. An administrative issue was addressed, along with working the vacant Onamia station. Walleye fishermen were checked on Mille Lacs and Kathio State Park was patrolled.

CO Don Bozovsky (Hibbing) spent the week working deer hunting and the season's almost daily complaint of shooting deer from the road. One hunter's deer was seized and he racked up violations of no license in possession, shoot deer from the road, untagged deer, no lottery deer permit, unregistered deer, possess loaded firearm in a state park and transport illegally taken big game animal. Three hours later, in the same location, a hunter with no blaze orange and no deer license was trying to take a deer from the road. Another road hunting case was followed up on with additional violations discovered. Another case of shooting after hours, hunting over bait, untagged deer and transport illegally taken big game animal was encountered with charges to follow.

CO Matt Frericks (Virginia) prepared and turned in reports to court for citations issued for big game violations. Colder temps and windy conditions made the final week of deer season were much slower and much less productive than the previous two. The primary violation and complaint during the final weekend of the deer season was road hunters and shooting from the roadway. Most smaller lakes in the Virginia area have completely iced over. Please use caution when traveling on ice.

CO Mark Fredin (Aurora) finished up the deer rifle season and noted it to be one the slowest he has observed. Hunter numbers were low along with few deer taken. Some were desperate and shot from the road, some took does without antlerless permits, and some had unfilled tags. Fredin also took care of a trespass complaint of individuals entering private land and taking spruce tops.

Ray — vacant.

I. Falls # 2 — vacant.

District 1 — Baudette area

CO Ben Huener (Roseau) checked deer hunters in Zone 1 and followed up on cases from the first week of deer season. Hunters were checked with CO Woinarowicz in the Skime and Beltrami Forest areas and with CO Gorecki in the Warroad area. Enforcement action is pending for an individual who killed a doe without a permit but instead put his son's tag on the deer. Enforcement action was also taken for individuals transporting loaded firearms.

CO Jeremy Woinarowicz (Thief River Falls) continued to monitor firearms deer hunting activity in the area seeing moderate success. Calls of wanton waste and litter were investigated where individuals failed to properly dispose of deer carcasses. He also checked a commercial minnow harvester that he came across while patrolling for trapping violations. Enforcement action included fail to register deer, transport loaded firearm, unlawful party hunting, and multiple commercial minnow violations.

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AGENDA DETAIL
SPECIAL BOARD WORK SESSION
BOARD OF EDUCATION – ISD #361
KOOCHICHING COUNTY
INTERNATIONAL FALLS, MINNESOTA
Thursday, December 3, 2013
Falls High School Library
at 5 pm.

PRELIMINARIES:

1.0 CALL TO ORDER

2.0 ROLL CALL

Gordon Dault _____ Darrell Wagner _____
Michelle Hebner _____ Dena Wenberg _____
Michael Holden _____ Nordy Nelson_____
Willi Kostiuk _____ Cory Netland _____

3.0 PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

4.0 APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Moved by _____, seconded by _____ to approve the agenda as presented. Motion carried/failed by a _____vote.

WORK SESSION

5.0 *Review of enrollment comparisons

6.0 *6.0*Update of cost adjustment items as proposed by Superintendent Nelson

7.0 7.0*consideration of personnel costs

***DISCUSSION ONLY –NO ACTION TO BE TAKEN**

8.0 ADJOURNMENT

Moved by _____, seconded by _____ to adjourn the meeting at _____ p.m. Motion carried/failed by a _____vote.