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MINNESOTA STARWATCH

Time to view lesser-known constellations

BY DEANE MORRISON
University of Minnesota

We'll be treated to a long, slow approach between the two brightest planets in 2015, a year that gets off to a running start with a full moon.

January's "wolf" moon reaches fullness at 10:53 p.m. on the 4th. Its name comes from the howling of hungry wolves outside Indian villages in the deep snow and cold. This moon takes a high trajectory across the night sky, a path that contrasts sharply with that of the sun's daytime path because in winter—especially early winter—the Northern Hemisphere tilts away from the sun and toward the full moon.

Also on the 4th, Earth reaches perihelion, the closest point to the sun in its orbit. On that day we'll swoop to a mere 91.4 million miles from our parent star.

In the predawn sky, Sat-

urn is climbing in the southeast, close to the claws of Scorpius. As the month goes by, the red star Antares, the scorpion's heart, comes up below the ringed planet and this pair shines as the two brightest points above the south-southeastern horizon. On the 16th, a waning crescent moon rises next to Saturn.

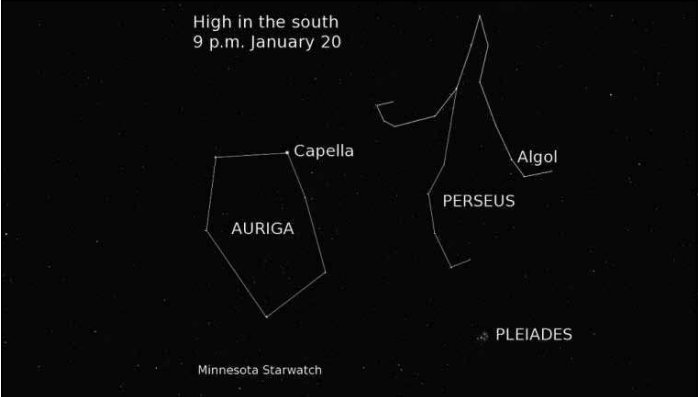
The middle third of January has several moonless hours each evening, so this is a good time to go out and find some lesser-known constellations, such as Perseus. Start with the bright, multicolored star Capella in Auriga, the charioteer. A five-sided constellation, Auriga is high in the south, above the hourglass form of Orion. Just west of Capella, use a star chart to make out the scraggly form of Perseus.

Perseus's second brightest star, Algol, the Demon Star, represents the winking eye of Medusa, the snake-

haired monster whose head Perseus carries. The winking is caused by the orbit of two stars in the Algol stellar system. In a cycle lasting not quite three days, the dimmer passes in front of the brighter and partially eclipses it from our point of view, causing a 10-hour dip in Algol's brightness.

Jupiter rises earlier each night, following the knot of bright winter constellations into the sky. Meanwhile, in the west, Venus is coming into its own as an evening star. A young moon joins the brilliant planet on the 21st; if you look about 45 minutes after sunset you may catch Mercury below the moon, all but lost in the sun's glare.

Venus and Jupiter are drawing closer, heading for a close encounter above the sunset horizon in June. But first, Venus has a rendezvous next month with Mars, which clings stubbornly to its patch of southwestern sky, resisting the inevitable



Looking for Perseus. Start with the bright, multicolored star Capella in Auriga, the charioteer. A five-sided constellation, Auriga is high in the south, above the hourglass form of Orion. Just west of Capella, use a star chart to make out the scraggly form of Perseus.

tumble into the sunset that happens after Earth leaves it behind. The Red Planet gets this power from its great speed, which moves it resolutely eastward against the background of stars. It easily outstrips the more distant Jupiter and Saturn, neither of whose staying power can hold a candle to

Mars'.

If you're in the Twin Cities any time from now through May, check out the "Eyes on the Universe" exhibit at the University of Minnesota's Bell Museum and learn how researchers study the moon, the Andromeda galaxy and beyond. Also, its hands-on,

kid-friendly companion exhibit, "A View from Space," turns the observer's eye back to Earth through satellite imagery.

■ 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 at http://www.astro.umn.edu.

ON THE FIRST DAY OF CHRISTMAS...



This ruffed grouse in a crab apple tree is the closest northern Minnesota will get to seeing a partridge in a pear tree around Christmastime.

STAFF PHOTO BY EMILY GEDDE

Fishing over the limit nets big fine, loss of boat

DNR REPORT

An Illinois angler faces nearly \$2,200 in fines and restitution, plus the loss of his boat and equipment, following an investigation by conservation officers with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources.

Charles H. Siegerdt, 54, Keeneyville, Illinois, was recently found with a gross over the limit of 21 bass (42 fillets) and 19 northern pike (38 fillets) at an Itasca County resort. The daily possession limit in Minnesota is six bass

and three northern.

"Mr. Siegerdt admitted to possessing an over limit in the initial contact, about 14 bass and northern combined," said Conservation Officer Jayson Hansen of Big Fork.

When asked where he kept his fish, Siegerdt pointed to the resort cabin he had been staying at and said the fish were in the cabin freezer.

Siegerdt led the officer into the cabin and opened the freezer.

"The freezer was full of plastic bags with frozen fish in them. I immediately

recognized this as over the legal limit," Hansen said.

When asked if he had skin patches on all the fillets, Siegerdt said, "No."

Minnesota law requires anglers leave at least a one-square-inch patch of skin with scales so fish species can be identified when transporting them.

Siegerdt said he had been coming to Minnesota to fish for 35 years.

Siegerdt asked if he had to pay the fine and restitution immediately; he was told he could, or he could pay it later, or he could go to court.

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The Koochiching County Attorney's Office will be accepting applications for the following position until 4:30 p.m. on January 9, 2015.

Position: Assistant County Attorney
Starting Date: February 2, 2015 or ASAP
Starting Pay: \$ 54,195/year (\$ 60,217 after 1year)
Benefits: PERA, BC/BS medical insurance, life insurance, voluntary dental and LTD insurance and a medical/ child care flexible spending plan.

Minimum Qualifications: Current license to practice law in the State of Minnesota and eligible to be licensed to practice in Federal Court. Successful applicant must pass a criminal background check prior to appointment and must not practice privately upon appointment.

The Assistant County Attorney is responsible for handling all statutory duties, including, but not limited to, criminal prosecution, juvenile delinquency, child protection, civil commitments, child support, appeals, zoning and personnel issues, provide legal advice to the County Board and all other County Departments.

Resumes and cover letter are encouraged but not in lieu of the required application, which should be sent to:

**Koochiching County Attorney's Office,
715 Fourth Street, International Falls, Minnesota 56649
(218) 283-1131**

Application forms and additional information regarding benefits, job requirements, job description and ADA accommodations are available from the County Attorney's Office, or on line at the County website:

www.co.koochiching.mn.us/news/newsEmployment.htm

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