

OUTDOORS

CALL OF THE WILD

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Call the Journal at 285-7411

Keep eye to the sky in September

BY DEANE MORRISON

Saturn swoops down on Venus in the middle of September, a month chock full of celestial events. Wasting no time, September opens with a waning moon high in the east the morning of the 1st. The moon forms a diamond-shaped figure with bright Jupiter highest, fainter Mars lowest, and the brighter Gemini twin, Pollux, opposite the moon. Look for this gathering about an hour before sunrise. The evening of the 5th, the bright star Spica, in Virgo, makes its closest pass to Venus as it heads down into the sunset. Use binoculars to find the star about three full moon widths below and left of Venus. On the 8th, a waxing crescent moon appears next to Venus. With its cusps pointing away from the planet, it'll look as if the moon is turning its back on Venus. Waiting in the wings is Saturn, above and left of

the pair. The moon moves on, but Saturn closes in on Venus, passing 3.5 degrees (7 full moon widths) above our sister planet on the 18th. Saturn ends the month well to the right of Venus in the west-southwest. As Saturn takes its slow fall in the evening, Mars makes a quick journey in the morning. Between the 7th and the 9th, the Red Planet glides across the subtly lovely Beehive star cluster. Mars will still be below the Gemini twins and Jupiter, but plenty high enough to see an hour before sunrise. While Mars and the Beehive is a combination not to be missed, to fully appreciate it you really must see it through binoculars. So grab yours before heading outside. Some 10 days later, September presents us with an annual treat: the harvest moon. Traditionally, the full moon closest to the autumnal equinox is given the

title "harvest moon," and some years it falls in early October. But this year's arrives just three days before the equinox, so there's no contest. The name "harvest moon" arose because for a few days around full moon, moonrise occurs only about 25 to 30 minutes later each night, ensuring an early-evening light source for farmers working late to harvest their crops. This year it reaches fullness on the 19th at 6:13 a.m., so you may want to enjoy it the night before. The harvest moon phenomenon mirrors what the sun does in March. Around the spring equinox, the sun moves most rapidly north, and the farther north it gets, the earlier it rises. Full moons, being opposite the sun in the sky, move most rapidly north as the sun is heading most rapidly south—which is around the time of the autumnal equinox. The moon's orbit around Earth still makes it rise later each night, but the interval is



A waxing moon occurs in September.

briefest this time of year. The equinox arrives at 3:44 p.m. CDT on the 22nd, when the Earth will be lighted from pole to pole. From then until the spring equinox, the farther north you go, the shorter the days. 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 8/21/13 Contact: Deane Morrison, University Relations, (612) 624-2346, morri029@umn.edu Find U of M astronomers and links to the world of astronomy athttp://www.astro.umn.edu.

Tamarack: Identification and Fun Facts

BY DANAE SCHAFTER
DNR Forester

Tamarack, scientific name Larix laricina, is also known as American larch. A unique tree as it is the only one in the state that loses its needles every year, similar to leaved species (known as a deciduous conifer). It is most common in the northern one third of Minnesota but can be found throughout much of the state. The majority of tamarack can be found growing in peatlands or wetlands either as the dominant species or mixed in with black spruce, white cedar, or balsam fir. This tree is not tolerant of living in the shade so is most often part of the overstory or

found growing in open areas. Identification is simple for this unique tree. In the spring and summer it has lush green needles that come off the branch in clumps of 15-35 individual needles. Fall brings the best time to seek out tamarack as it turns a brilliant yellow before losing its needles. If it is winter it will appear like a spruce that has lost all of its needles. The bark is orange-brown in color and rough in appearance. Cones will be on newer growth branches and are small (1-2cm) beginning a reddish color and turning tan with age. There are many uses for this tree. It is used in the manufacture of paper, posts, poles, rough lumber, and

burns hot as firewood. The tough, durable, yet flexible if cut into thin strips wood has also been used to make snowshoes. Tamarack has a natural resistance to rot and so has been commonly used to corduroy roads, as railroad ties, or for dock cribs. There is evidence that parts of the tree were also used in natural remedies for various ailments. A company called Lonza uses fiber from tamarack trees as an ingredient in things such as chocolate as it supports the immune system and has antioxidant qualities. Humans, porcupine, snowshoe hare, red squirrels, mice, voles, shrews, spruce grouse, sharp-tail grouse, pine siskin and crossbills (birds) among

many other species all benefit from tamarack. Tamarack is reported to have survived temperatures as low as -79 Fahrenheit, and live as long as 335 years. Unfortunately there is bad news on the horizon for this wonderful tree in Koochiching county. Larch sawfly, larch casebearer, and larch beetle are some insects that specifically target tamarack. These insect populations have been building on the west side of the county, as can be seen by dead trees spotted along Highway 71 just south of Big Falls. This is part of a natural cycle. I hope you have learned something new about this tree. For a great fall show of tamarack yellow take a drive



STAFF PHOTOS

Cones are found on new growth.

down County Road 30 west of Big Falls, or County Road 13 north of Big Falls when the leaves start changing.

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Words cannot express our sincere APPRECIATION

for all the cards, food, flowers and especially the hugs. It was so overwhelming to see so many at Gary's celebration of life. We lost Gary on July 25th after a 4½ year battle with lung cancer. He never complained and was still out in his garage everyday, even if it was just to check his email. He was a great friend and was always there to lend a helping hand on projects like roofing jobs or building a cabin. He was always there! In recent years he was very involved with the MN Elks Youth Camp every spring even when he had to drag his oxygen tank with him. He was a true inspiration. We especially want to thank our families for all of their support before and after this journey. We have a very special "thank you" to Jerry Klow. He remained a very loyal friend and found time to travel with Gary to Chemo appts in Hibbing whenever he could. If we have forgotten anyone please know that we are grateful for each and everyone of you.

God bless you all!

Joanne Harris
Mary Jo, Jace and Bradin
John, Stacy and Gregory