

EAGLES EYE ON THE SKY – DECEMBER 2019

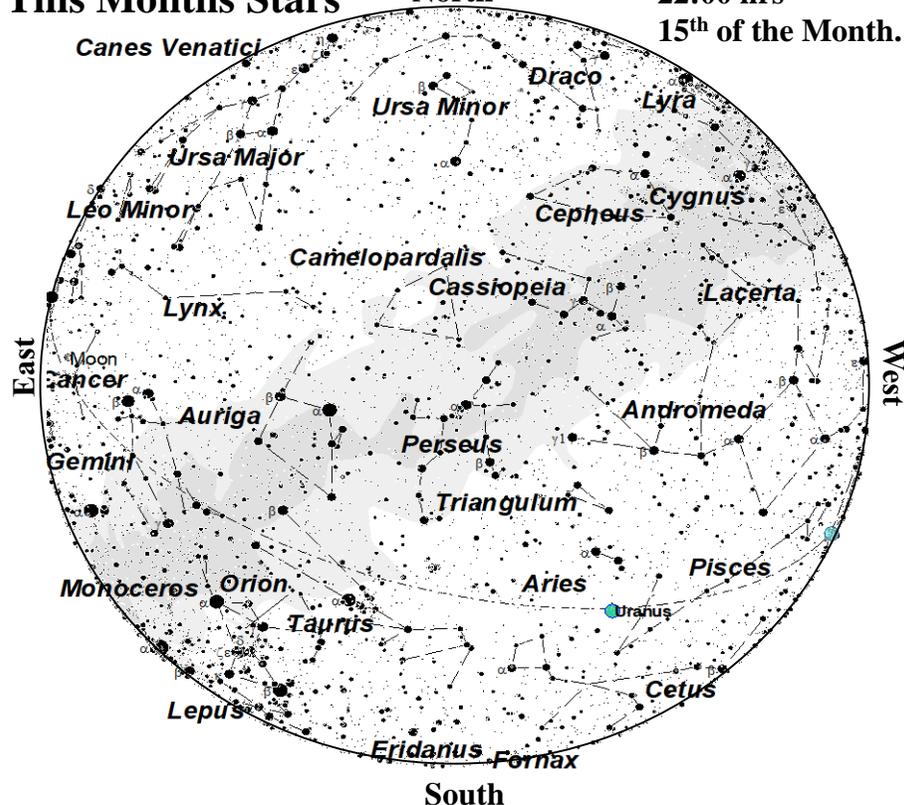
Dave Eagle's very last monthly sky guide.

This Months Stars

North

22:00 hrs

15th of the Month.



Overhead at the time of our map is the constellation of Perseus. The bright yellow star Capella dominates in the close by Auriga with the triangular asterism of “The Kids” next to it. Below Auriga is Taurus with its two wonderful open clusters, The Seven Sisters, or Pleiades. How many can you see naked eye? The “V”-shaped Hyades. The bright red star Aldebaran “The Red Eye of the Bull” lies 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 in the south eastern sky. Towards the west, the head of Pegasus is getting close to the horizon and is close to setting. Cygnus is standing on it's head as it flies down towards the north west. The Little Bear, Ursa Minor hangs directly down from Polaris by its tail. The Plough is now standing straight up, delicately balanced on the “handle”. The head of Leo, the Lion is poking its head just above the horizon heralding the coming of spring skies. **Algol** - Fades from its usual magnitude of 2.1 to 3.4 at the following times: 5th 3.4h, 8th 0.2h, 10th 21h, 28th 1.9h and 30th 22.7h.

THE MOON

First Qtr. – 4th.

Full – 12th.

Last Qtr. – 19th.

New – 26th. (Annular Eclipse).

Crescent Moon visible:

23rd & 24th – Morning pre-dawn sky.

28th & 29th – Evening sky.

The Moon will be close to:

Neptune on the 3rd & 4th.

Uranus on the 7th & 8th.

Hyades on the 11th.

Regulus on the 17th.

Spica on the 20th.

Mars on the 23rd.

Saturn on the 27th (Difficult).

Venus on the 28th & 29th.

THE SOLAR SYSTEM

MERCURY – May be spotted very low in the south eastern sky before sunrise during the first few days of the month. It quickly approaches the Sun and gets lost in the glare as it approaches superior conjunction next month.

VENUS – Moves away from The Sun during the month. It is very bright at magnitude -3.9 in the south western sky after dark but hugs the horizon. Passes close to Saturn in bright twilight on the evening of the 11th. It also makes a nice pairing with The Moon on the 28th & 29th.

MARS – Still remains very low in the south-eastern pre-dawn sky at magnitude +1.6. Its small disk size and turbulent atmosphere makes it a challenging object to observe surface features. Save this challenging planet for later in the year.

JUPITER – Reaches conjunction with The Sun on the 27th, so will be lost in the evening twilight and will not be seen this month.

SATURN – Now slipping rapidly into the evening twilight in the south western sky just after dark. Venus passes close on the evening of the 11th, so may help you to find it low down in the darkening sky.

URANUS – Visible in the southern sky just after dark in the constellation of Aquarius. At magnitude +5.7 it is theoretically a naked eye object but needs dark skies. A small blue-green disk can be seen in a telescope.

NEPTUNE – Now visible for most of the night at magnitude +7.9 in the constellation of Aries. It has a much smaller green-blue disk than Uranus.

GEMINID METEORS. – This reliable meteor shower is active between the 8th & 17th of the month. Maximum occurs on the 14th when there could be up to 100 meteors seen per hour. But the just past full Moon interferes somewhat.

COMET 289P / Blanpain. – This comet could become a naked eye object this month. It moves northwards from Aquarius and through The Square of Pegasus as the New Year breaks. A map and more details will be posted on my Web site.

Thank you to everyone who has found my sky diary useful since 1987.

My Web site will continue to be updated with new information as it becomes available: www.eagleseye.me.uk