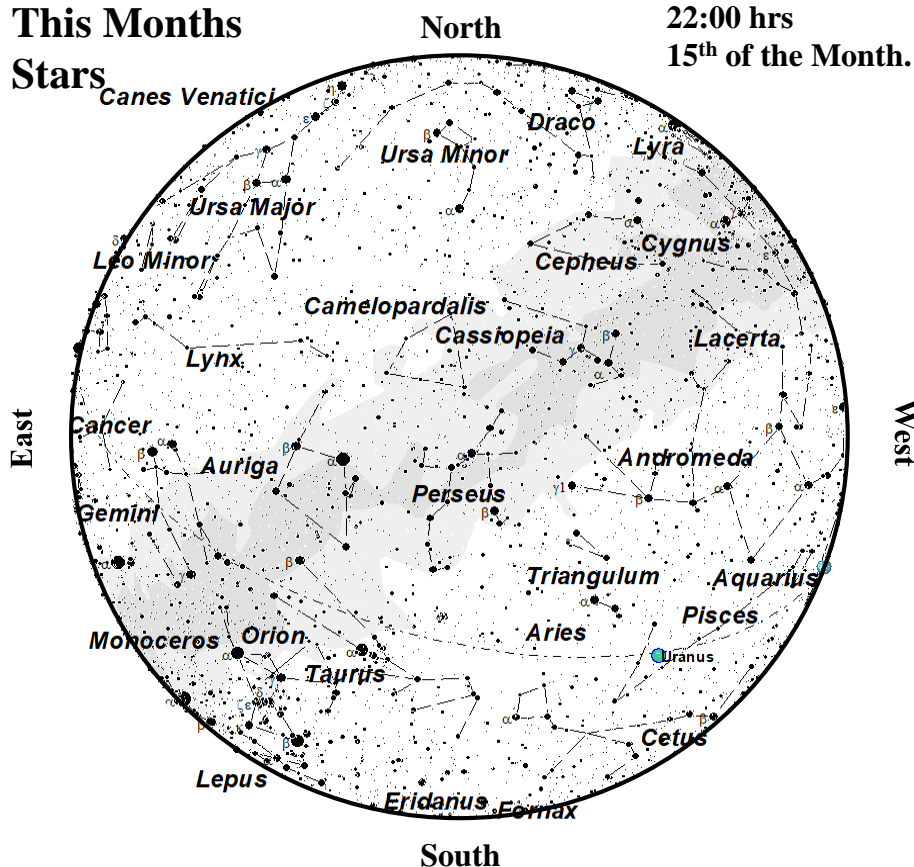


# EAGLES EYE ON THE SKY – DECEMBER 2017

Dave Eagle's monthly sky guide.

## This Months

### Stars



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 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 Hyades 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. In the western sky, the head of Pegasus is getting close to the horizon. Cygnus is standing on it’s head as it flies down towards the north west. The Little Bear, Ursa Minor hanging directly down from Polaris and The Plough is now standing straight up balanced on the “handle”. The head of Leo, the Lion is poking its head just poking above the east horizon. **Algol** - fades from its usual magnitude of 2.1 to 3.4 at the following times: 1<sup>st</sup> 03h., 4<sup>th</sup> 0h., 6<sup>th</sup> 20h., 21<sup>st</sup> 4h., 24<sup>th</sup> 1h., 26<sup>th</sup> 22h.

## THE MOON

Full – 3<sup>rd</sup>.  
Last Qtr. – 10<sup>th</sup>.  
New – 18<sup>th</sup>.  
First Qtr. – 26<sup>th</sup>.

### Crescent Moon visible:

15<sup>th</sup> & 16<sup>th</sup>. Eastern morning sky.  
20<sup>th</sup> & 21<sup>st</sup>. South-western evening sky.

## The Moon will be close to:

The Hyades on the 3<sup>rd</sup> & 30<sup>th</sup>.  
Regulus on the 9<sup>th</sup>.  
Spica on the 13<sup>th</sup>.  
Mars, Jupiter & Vesta  
on the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup>.  
Neptune on the 24<sup>th</sup>.  
Uranus on the 27<sup>th</sup>.

## THE SOLAR SYSTEM

**MERCURY** – Reaches greatest western elongation of 21° on the 15<sup>th</sup>. But due to the shallow angle of the ecliptic it stays very low down in the south-western evening twilight, so is unlikely to be seen this month.

**VENUS** – Now lost in the eastern twilight as it approaches superior conjunction early next month, so will not be visible.

**MARS** – Stays low in the south-eastern sky, now getting further from the Sun in the constellation of Libra. The planets disk is extremely small and challenging observing, but easily found close to Jupiter in the morning twilight at the end of the month.

**JUPITER** – Now easily visible at -1.7 magnitude low in the south eastern sky before dawn. Approaches Mars towards the end of the month.

**SATURN** – Reaches conjunction with the Sun on the 21<sup>st</sup>, so will not be visible.

**URANUS** – Visible for most of the night in Pisces. At magnitude +5.8 it is just about visible to the naked eye and can easily be observed as a small blue disk through the telescope. Moon close on the 27<sup>th</sup>.

**NEPTUNE** – Fairly high up in the evening sky just south of the 4<sup>th</sup> magnitude star Lambda Aquilae. At magnitude +7.9 it will need binoculars or a small telescope to identify. A larger telescope and high magnification is required to reveal its small pale blue disk.

**GEMINID METEORS** – This shower is visible between the 8<sup>th</sup> & 17<sup>th</sup> of the month. With a maximum predicted rate of 100+ per hour, in the early hours of the 14<sup>th</sup>. With the Moon well out of the way until early morning, conditions for viewing these slow moving meteors is very favourable.

**PAETHON** – This minor planet, the parent body of the Geminids, passes close to Earth on the 16<sup>th</sup>. It will be in the constellation of Andromeda. At 11<sup>th</sup> magnitude it will be visible using a reasonably modest telescope.

**URSID METEORS** – A favourable viewing between the 17<sup>th</sup> & 25<sup>th</sup>, a maximum of possibly 10 per hour on the 23<sup>rd</sup>.

For a much fuller guide, maps, graphics and my latest news  
visit my blog: [www.star-gazing.co.uk](http://www.star-gazing.co.uk)