

# CAROLINA SKIES DECEMBER 2019, JANUARY 2020

Hold the star chart over your head. Find north, and align your chart accordingly. You may need a flashlight, but be sure not to ruin your night vision with a bright bulb. Use a red light, or put a brown paper bag over your flashlight for a muted glow.

Bright stars abound in winter's skies. The three belt stars of Orion the Hunter can help guide the way to some of them. Above the belt is Betelgeuse and below is Rigel. The belt points southeast to Sirius, the brightest star in the night sky. Northwest from the belt you will find orangish Aldebaran, in Taurus the Bull. Procyon, Pollux, Castor, and Capella lie in a wide arc northeast of Orion.

**Venus** blazes brilliantly in the southwest shortly after sunset. At the beginning of December, it is accompanied in early evening twilight by two other planets – **Jupiter**, below and to Venus's right; and **Saturn**, above and to its left. Advancing toward mid-December, Venus approaches and passes Saturn, while Jupiter sinks and disappears into the solar glare. Saturn then follows Jupiter and disappears by New Year's Day. Venus climbs higher in the early evening sky throughout January. In the predawn sky, **Mars**, along with lower-hanging **Mercury**, float above the horizon in the east in early December, but then Mercury plunges low and disappears into morning twilight late in the month. Jupiter then reappears – this time in eastern morning twilight – around mid-January.

Adults and teens can learn more about the night sky at **Starry Nights: Winter Skies** (Dec. 18, 7:30-9 p.m.). For families with children ages 7-12, our **Star Families** series continues with **The Milky Way** (Dec. 14, 3:30-4:15 p.m.) and **Winter Skies** (Jan. 11, 3:30-4:15 p.m.)

## Skywatching Sessions:

If you liked your *Carolina Skies* planetarium experience, consider joining us to view the real sky! For information on Morehead's free monthly public skywatching sessions please check our web page: [www.moreheadplanetarium.org/skywatching](http://www.moreheadplanetarium.org/skywatching)

Admission to skywatching is free, telescopes are active, and constellation tours are provided. Sessions will be cancelled if weather is poor. For directions to the skywatching sites, cancellation updates, and information on astronomy and skywatching classes for children and adults, call **919-962-1236** or visit [www.moreheadplanetarium.org](http://www.moreheadplanetarium.org).

