

CAROLINA SKIES DECEMBER 2021, JANUARY 2022

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.

December opens with **Jupiter, Saturn, and Venus** putting on a nice display in the southwestern sky soon after sunset. Venus is the closest to the horizon of the trio and shines brilliantly. Second brightest is Jupiter, to the left of and higher than Venus. Between these two shines yellowish Saturn. As December draws to a close, the three planets sink toward southwestern twilight. Venus begins to disappear into the solar glare and is briefly replaced by quick, elusive **Mercury** as January opens. Mercury and Saturn draw close together, then follow Venus into disappearance by mid-month, leaving Jupiter by itself in the early evening. During late January, Venus joins the red planet **Mars** in the eastern pre-dawn sky.

For an online hub of resources for you to enjoy at home, check out **Morehead At Home** - <https://moreheadplanetarium.org/explore/morehead-at-home/>

Skywatching Sessions:

Join us in viewing the sky! For information on Morehead's free public skywatching sessions, please check our web page, <http://moreheadplanetarium.org/skywatching> or call 919-962-1236.

