

CAROLINA SKIES DECEMBER 2022, JANUARY 2023

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.

A trio of planets grace the evening in early December. Bright **Jupiter** is the first of the three to appear with the onset of twilight, seen midway up in the southern sky. The planet **Mars** glows with an orangey tint well over to the northeast of Jupiter as the sky continues to darken, and pale yellow **Saturn** shines a little to Jupiter's west. In January, the three planets are joined just after sunset by brilliant **Venus**, as it emerges from the Sun's glare. Venus then approaches Saturn, culminating in a close passing between the two on the 22nd – accompanied by a thin crescent Moon nearby. In late January, **Mercury** makes a brief appearance just before sunrise low in the southeast.

Catch the **Geminid Meteor Shower** on or around the evening of December 13! (Morehead will hold a skywatching event at *Little River Regional Park* coinciding with the Geminids. See more information at the web link listed below.)

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.

