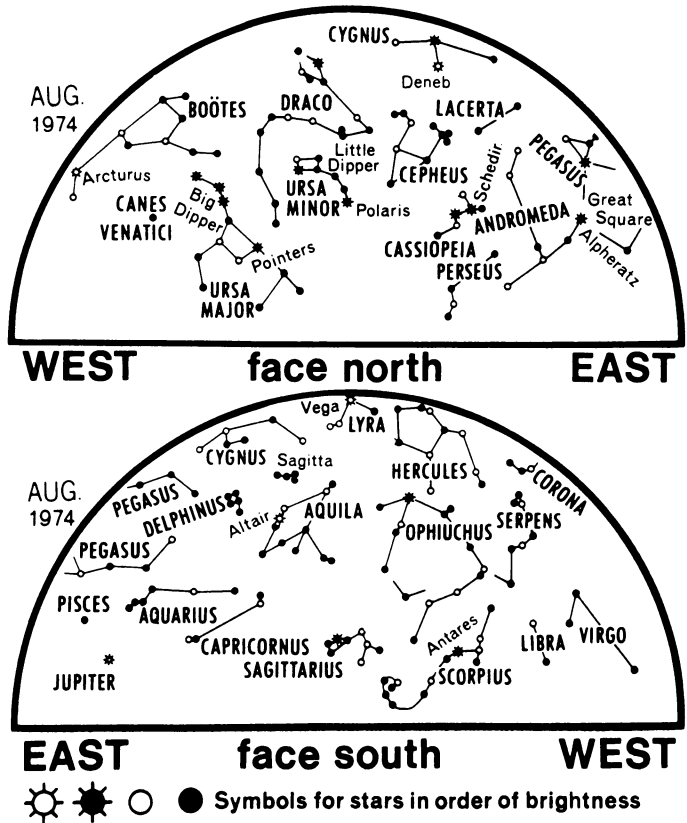


Stars of August



August 2	9:00 pm EDT	Moon farthest, distance 252,500 miles
	11:57 pm	Full Moon
6	6:00 am	Moon passes north of Jupiter
10	10:46 pm	Moon in last quarter
12	early am	Perseid meteors at maximum
14	11:00 pm	Moon passes south of Saturn
16	5:00 am	Moon passes south of Venus
17	3:00 am	Moon nearest, distance 222,200 miles
	6:00 am	Mercury behind sun
	3:02 pm	New Moon
19	2:00 am	Moon passes south of Mars
24	11:38 am	Moon in first quarter
30	1:00 am	Moon farthest, distance 252,270 miles

by James Stokley

Mid-August is the time for one of the most regular displays of meteors or "shooting stars." Often, however, the moon is at or near full at the time the meteors are most numerous, about Aug. 12. Then its bright glare reduces greatly the number that you can see. But in 1974 the last quarter phase of the moon comes on the tenth and it will rise about 12:30 a.m. on the 12th.

Some meteors are sporadic but most of them seem to come from the constellation of Perseus, which is low in the northeast on August evenings. This is called, therefore, the Perseid meteor shower.

An effect of perspective makes their

paths seem to converge in Perseus, as it makes the parallel tracks of a railroad seem to come together at the horizon. Small particles, or "meteoroids," which are the debris of a comet last seen in 1862, move around the sun in the old cometary orbit. Many of them are about as large as grains of sand and their path intersects the orbit of the earth at its Aug. 12 position.

When we get to that part of our orbit many of the meteoroids enter our atmosphere, where friction burns them up, causing the streak of light that we call a "shooting star." Meteors are most numerous after midnight, because then we are on the forward side of the earth and meet the meteoroids head-on. Before mid-

night only those which can catch up to earth reach our atmosphere.

Actually it takes several weeks to pass through the whole swarm—from about July 25 to August 18. For several days around the maximum, you may see as many as a quarter of the number you would on the 12th, if you have favorable conditions. So if it's cloudy on the night of the 11th, you might try again the following night. Or start looking for them on the night of the 10th.

Five stars of the first magnitude or brighter appear on our star maps (which show the sky as it looks about 11:00 p.m., local daylight saving time, on the 1st; 10:00 p.m. on the 15th and 9:00 p.m. on the 31st). □

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