

## Our Night Sky for December 3rd

As I mentioned last week the night sky offers us a wide variety of both summer and winter stars and constellations during these winter months. A significant date is coming in a little less than three weeks.

December 21st is the winter solstice. With 15 hours of night, the sun reaches its lowest noontime elevation and winter officially begins. While astronomers enjoy all the hours of sky access, most people like a day a little more balanced. Well the good news is that as of this day, daylight hours begin increasing ~~while~~ slowly at first, but increase daily. By Christmas day it's five minutes longer than December 21st.

If you are looking for a useful Christmas gift for an astronomer in your life, I would suggest a couple of helpful books. The first is the widely used 'Nightwatch' book by Canadian author Terence Dickinson. Get the spiral bound one as it's much easier to use the sky maps. Another great book is 'The National Audubon Society, Field Guide to the Night Sky'. This book will take a little while to learn how to use effectively but once you become familiar, it supplies a lot of detailed information that you won't find in most Astronomy books.

Another item probably comes to mind first, a telescope or binoculars. This is a tricky purchase because there are so many choices offered. If you buy one a bit too complicated to use comfortably or of lesser quality, these gifts will end up sitting in the basement never used. In a few weeks when open house starts again, see us at the observatory. We can help you pick the correct optics for a delayed gift.

But by far the best gift for anyone interested in astronomy, is a membership in the Prince George Astronomical Society. Before long, you will be picking out your own optical gift and be confident using it to enjoy the night sky.