

Our Night Sky for January 15th, 2024

Anything interesting in our night sky by mid week will be in the southern sky. As I've mentioned before, with the long dark nights we still have some of the summer constellations visible but about midevening Orion dominates the south eastern sky and a little further right is magnificent Jupiter almost touching a half full moon. This is when a quick check on an astronomy software program is helpful, because during the night as the summer constellations set in the early evening the winter constellations assert themselves. The Pleiades, Castor and Pollux are all easy to find bright stars, which illustrate the reason for learning constellations. So, if you're interested in learning the sky the most valuable step is familiarity with the constellations.

If you have noticed, the days are steadily getting longer. Since the winter solstice on December 21st, we are already at almost a half hour more daylight. What may not be as easy to spot is the rate of change. At the winter and summer solstice the rate of change is as little as a few seconds a day but as we move toward the spring equinox, on March 19, and again September 22 for the fall equinox, the rate of change reaches it's maximum of about four minutes a day, slowly changing our night sky.