

Our Night Sky for August 5th. 2024

Last week we found our way to the Andromeda galaxy, one of our nearby galactic neighbours, high in our eastern night sky.

In this same area of the sky a little lower using a bit of imagination you might spot the head of the constellation Perseus. This rectangular head sits on top of a stick man. His peaked cap is very near and points at Cassiopeia the W shaped constellation we located last week as well. This area of the sky is the radiant for the Perseid meteor shower which is already building to it's peak on the 12th of August. During the next few days, the earth will plunge deeper into the debris trail left by comet Swift Tuttle. This is usually the most spectacular of the half dozen notable showers we are treated to each year. A count of 100 meteors an hour is not uncommon. This area of our sky is the leading edge at about midnight as the earth makes its way through this rocky field.

Meteors from this shower are rarely of any significant size they are generally small rocks a few kilograms and burn up before making it to the ground.

The early earth about four billion years ago was just a large collection of mountain size rocks and debris falling in toward the gravity of the sun. The early earth was barren and sterile. Science has demonstrated that the nearly constant flow of material from the outer solar system carried sunward and scooped up by the early earth has been the source of the water and minerals and maybe even life brought to our still forming planet from our Night Sky.