

Our Night Sky for May 5th, 2025

Ever optimistic I'm thinking we may be entering the anticipated pleasant spring evenings with reasonably clear skies overhead. It is still a good idea to print a couple of simple star maps from the internet, if the sky is partly cloudy, having a star map will let you identify a few bright stars and help you orient yourself if the sky clears later in the evening.

I am hoping the sky will clear later this evening since tonight is the peak of the Eta Aquarids meteor shower. This is one of the best meteor showers of the year with counts of fifty to sixty meteors an hour. This meteor shower is particularly interesting because it is the debris trail from comet Halley. Each year we pass through this debris trail twice, first in early May and again in October. The Orionid meteor shower around October 20th. This means that Comet Halley orbits on approximately the same plane as the solar systems planets and may have once orbited closer in. Comet Halley last was in our skies in 1986 but it was on the other side of the solar system and was not much to see. In 2023 Comet Halley reached the point furthest away from the sun and is now falling back into the inner solar system to once again be in our sky about the end of July 2061. The radiant Aquarius does not rise until after midnight but look due east as late as possible, by this time the moon will be close to setting and you can probably spot a few meteors in Our Night Sky.