

Astronomy in the Two Dales

September

This month we have reached the end of summer and the beginning of the astronomy season as the nights grow ever longer.

Our first target for observation is the giant planet Neptune, which is at its closest approach to earth on the 1st. However, this mighty sphere of frozen gas and ice is still 4,459,504,400 km away and appears as a tiny blue dot in all but the largest telescopes. If you do have access to N.A.S.A style equipment, then Neptune rises in the east at 9.30 pm and sets in the west just before dawn, and could you let me know as I would like a look too.

This month the new moon is due on the 13th, there is also a partial solar eclipse on this day, however it is not visible from our part of the world, however, we have other wonders to enjoy.

On the 23rd of September at 8.21 am we reach the vernal equinox, the official beginning of autumn, this is followed on the 28th by the full moon and it is once again a supermoon, being at its closest approach to earth this year. Combined with this we have a total eclipse of the moon on the same day, so the night of the 27th and the morning of the 28th will be great for astronomy as the darkened face of the moon will bring the stars out.

Moonrise occurs at 7.30 pm on the 27th, with the total eclipse expected 2.47 am on the 28th, the eclipse being caused by the earth coming inbetween the sun and moon and blocking the suns light.

As this is early on a Monday morning I see no problem for many of you being late to work that day after an all night observation of the event, as all your employers are so understanding of such matters!



