

Look for 'Hunter's Moon' Sunday



RAYMOND E. BULLOCK

SKY WATCH
October, the first full month of Autumn, brings us the end of Daylight Saving Time, a meteor shower and a momentous anniversary date.

Although this is the 10th month of 1992, in the early Roman calendar

October was the eighth month of the year, hence its name began with the prefix octo. But as the Bard once asked, "What's in a name?"

This month there will be a decrease of one hour and 22 minutes in the amount of sunlight we receive.

The planets Mars, Jupiter and Saturn will be visible in the morning sky; Mercury and Venus

are evening objects, but Mercury will not be well placed for viewing. Oct. 4 was the anniversary of an event that stunned the world. On this day in 1957, thirty-five years ago, the Soviet Union launched Sputnik. This satellite had no scientific value whatsoever, but the political implications were enormous. All Sputnik did was transmit "beeps" as it orbited the earth. Except when it passed over the United States, then it went "ha-ha-ha!"

The space race has cost billions of dollars and, sadly, numerous lives, both in space and at launch facilities. Yet the overall benefits have been enormous. The quest for space led directly to miniaturization and computers that permeate nearly every level of our lives, from health care to automobiles, to cellular technology, to satellite broadcasting. . . well, the list is nearly endless, and volumes (both pro and con) have

been written on the subject of space exploration.

Full Moon is at 2:03 p.m. EDT on Oct. 11. The moon is fully lighted by the sun and will be visible all night long.

This full moon is known as the Hunters' Moon, so named because the light it reflected benefited hunters who were out after sunset. The Hunters' Moon is always the full moon following the Harvest Moon.

On Oct. 13 Venus will be six degrees above the horizon, 45 minutes after sunset (Sunset on the 13th will be at 6:54 p.m. EDT.) Venus will be 17 degrees to the left of Antares and is closing in on that star.

The moon passes two degrees below the Pleiades (PLEI) a dice) star cluster on the evening of the 14th. Look toward the east northeast, three hours after sunset, and use binoculars to see all the members of this cluster; the bright

moonlight will make seeing them with the naked-eye difficult. The Pleiades mark the "shoulder" of Taurus the bull. Ten degrees below the moon is Aldebaran (al DEB a ran), the bull's red "eye."

Saturn is stationary, ending its retrograde (backward) motion, on Oct. 16. It has been drifting slowly westward through the stars of Capricornus, and now resumes its direct (forward) motion. Planets don't really change direction; what we see is an optical illusion, caused by the faster moving earth passing a slower moving planet.

The moon will be 10 degrees above Aldebaran on the morning of the 16th. The two objects will be visible in the west southwest at about 7 a.m. EDT.

Raymond Bullock is former coordinator of the planetarium and observatory at the Cranbrook Institute of Science. He now works for a Troy firm which specializes in laser displays and effects.

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