



Special report 2007:

A Night with the Perseids

On the night of the 12th to 13th August I went to my brother's cottage in Laughton, East Sussex in search of Perseid meteors. It turned out to be an amazing night only marred by heavy dew and 1 hour of heavy cloud, otherwise totally clear. Centred 5 miles away from Lewes, Uckfield and Hailsham, it is far enough away to provide decent, dark skies.

We saw roughly 100 Perseid meteors and 10 sporadic between us. Quite coincidentally, I observed several small trails, all in the same direction west to east in the same area in Aquarius over 1 hour; might they have been satellite debris re-entry?

A 100mm Skywatcher Pro ED on a Driven Vixen GP mount was used to view Jupiter and we were treated to a shadow transit of Jupiter's largest moon Ganymede. Other objects we looked at were M8 the Lagoon Nebula, M20 Triffid Nebula, M57 Ring Nebula, M15 Globular Cluster, M31 and 32 The Andromeda galaxy and its satellite, Albireo (β Cygni) the double and ϵ Lyrae the double, double star, M45 The Pleiades and Mars; however no detail was seen on the small disc.

25×100 binoculars were used to look at NGC 7000 The North American Nebula, NGCs 869 and 884 Double Cluster in Perseus, including a blinding Perseid meteor! We also looked at the star clouds of the Milky Way from Perseus through Cassiopeia, Cepheus, Cygnus, Vulpecula including Collinder 399 (the Coat hanger Asterism), Aquila, Scutum and Sagittarius. Early on, my brother shouted "what's that bright star moving across the sky!" It was the International Space Station, quickly swinging the binoculars around we both managed to see it and the structure was vaguely discernable, tracking it was surprisingly easy.

It was a perfect night of observing for someone who's used to showing London's orange smog to tourists. Considering I don't often get the opportunity to get out, it was incredibly lucky to see so much activity in one night. Everyone must join the Campaign for Dark Skies now!

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Figure 1: Two Perseids Cross Cassiopeia, note M31 centre right and the Double Cluster centre bottom. Taken by Simon Lang using a Minolta SLR, 35mmlens at f3.5 on 400ASA film for 12 minutes piggybacked on Vixen GP mount.

