



NOBLE PLANETARIUM SKYLINE

December 2008

This holiday month our sky watchers will be lead across the winter sky by the bright star, Sirius, the dog star. Because of the cold weather, the night sky will be clearer than ever for deep sky viewing.

Mercury: Will pop its head out from the glare of the setting Sun in the west to say “hello” in time for the Winter Solstice at 6 PM on December 21. It will disappear only four days later to hide behind the Sun.

Venus: Stays bright in our western night sky throughout this month. It will rise as the Sun sets around 6 PM, but will set in only a matter of two hours, so get a good look at it while you can. Venus will be in the constellation of Capricorn.

Capricorn is known to the Greeks as a mixed up creature that has the tail of a fish and the upper body of a goat. No matter who tells you the story, this constellation has a very messy history involving battling Titans and a scared witless goat-god Pan.

Mars: Mars is lost to viewers and below the horizon.

Jupiter: Sticks close to Venus in the western sky in early December, but will slide away and disappear completely beneath the horizon at the end of the month. It will be in the constellation of Capricorn.

Saturn: Still hanging onto Leo the Lion’s tail, Saturn will rise around 2 AM and stay in the late night sky all throughout December.

Keep your eyes on Saturn this upcoming year because the rings seem to completely disappear on October 4, 2009. This is an event that happens only once every 15 years due to Saturn’s 29.5 year long

orbit around the Sun. From our vantage point here on Earth we are viewing Saturn's rings "edge-on."

***** **November's Moon** *****

The Moon:	First Quarter:	December 5
	Full Moon:	December 12
	Last Quarter:	December 19
	New Moon:	December 27

Winter Solstice

The Winter Solstice is the shortest day of the year. People in the past celebrated this day because they knew that after the solstice occurred the days would become longer as the new year began. On the Winter Solstice, the sun only graces us for eight out of the twelve possible hours of daylight.

***** **Star Parties** *****

November 4 was our last star party of this season. Many thanks to the members of the Fort Worth Astronomical Society for their contribution to the continued success of our star-gazing evenings! We will begin again in March, 2009. These Star Parties are free and open to the public. Join us next year!

For more information about the night sky check out our website at www.fortworthmuseum.org or contact the Noble Planetarium at 817.255.9300 or email at planet@fwms.org. Compiled by Linda Krouse and Sarah Littler of the Noble Planetarium