



The Binocular Sky

December
2011

Newsletter

Introduction

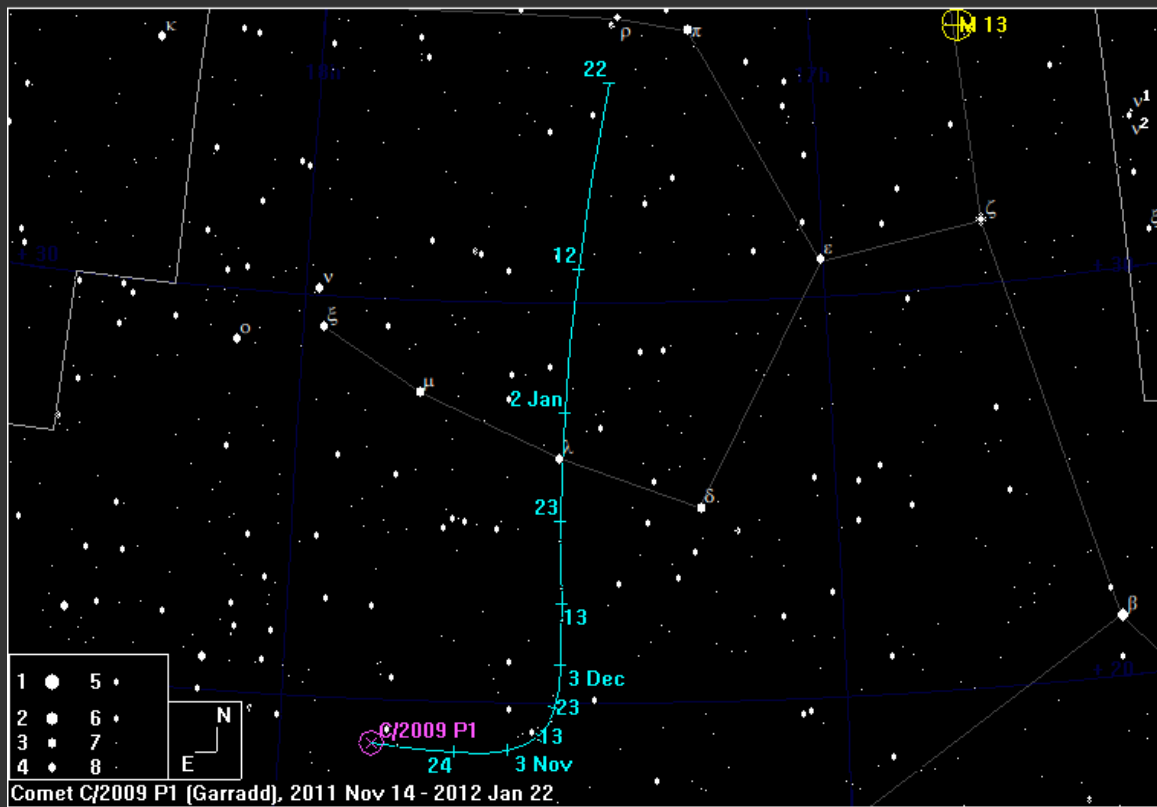
Welcome to the first *Binocular Sky* Newsletter. The intention of this monthly offering is to highlight some of the binocular targets for the coming month. It is primarily targeted at observers in the UK, but should have some usefulness for observers anywhere north of Latitude 30°N. For this Newsletter to be a useful tool, it needs to have the information that YOU want in it; therefore please do not be shy about making requests – if I can accommodate your wishes, I shall do so.

Transient Objects

The only transient object of note this month is Comet C/2009 P1 (Garradd), which is making its way through Hercules. During December, it transitions from being an object that is best observed in the evening to one that is best observed in the morning.

Date	RA	Declination	Magnitude
2011 Nov 25	17h30m51.79s	+20 00' 45.2"	9.5
2011 Nov 30	17h30m31.25s	+20 32' 00.9"	9.4
2011 Dec 05	17h30m21.40s	+21 09' 35.1"	9.4
2011 Dec 10	17h30m18.76s	+21 53' 58.5"	9.3
2011 Dec 15	17h30m20.13s	+22 45' 49.2"	9.3
2011 Dec 20	17h30m22.29s	+23 45' 55.5"	9.3
2011 Dec 25	17h30m21.54s	+24 55' 16.7"	9.2
2011 Dec 30	17h30m13.34s	+26 15' 01.4"	9.2
2012 Jan 04	17h29m52.52s	+27 46' 26.4"	9.1

Comet Garradd Finder Chart



The other comet, P/2006 T1 (Levy), that several sources say will become visible in December, has not been observed since 2006 Dec 01, shortly after its discovery. It was thought to have been recovered in June of this year at magnitude 20, but nobody has been able to confirm this as there have been no subsequent observations. There is currently some doubt as to whether it will become visible again.

The Deep Sky

December marks the welcome return of the *Pleiades* (M45) and the *Great Orion Nebula* (M42) to early evening observation at a reasonable altitude. The *trio of open clusters* in Auriga and M35 in Gemini are also worth observing. While you are looking at M35, also see if you can identify two smaller open clusters, NGC 2158, which is half a degree to the SE, and the slightly more difficult IC 2157, which is a degree to the ESE. (Yellow text is hyperlinked to charts.)

The Deep Sky (contd)

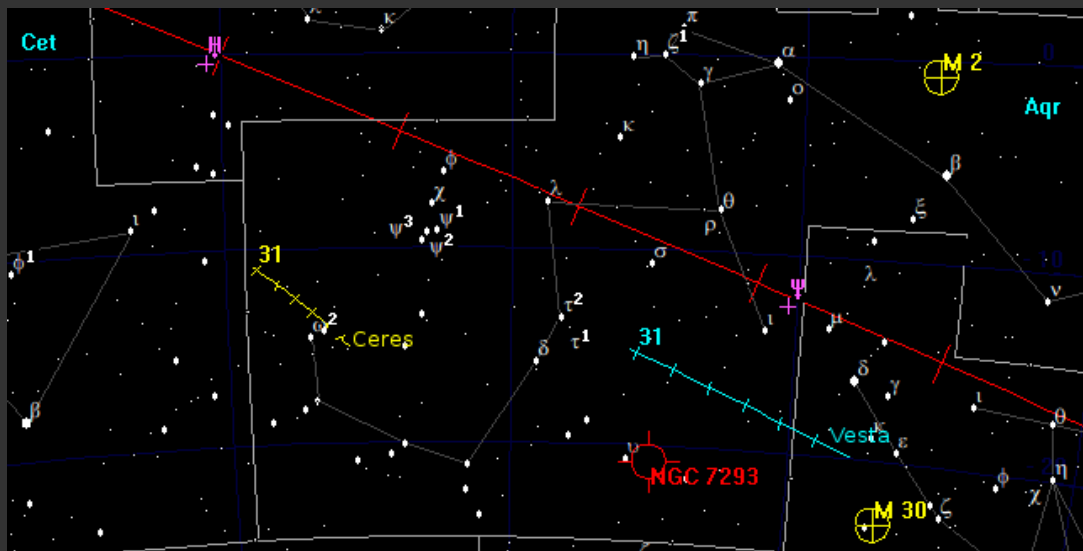
For an interactive map of Deep Sky Objects visible on December evenings, please visit: http://binocularsky.com/binoc_monthlymap.php

The Solar System

Planets

Uranus is slightly brighter than 6th magnitude and is theoretically a naked eye object, but will be low in the sky after dusk, so binoculars will be essential. It is in *Pisces* and moves just over the width of the Moon during the month as it reverts to prograde motion.

Neptune is 8th magnitude, on the border of *Aquarius* and *Capricornus*. It moves about 11 arcmin during the month.



Asteroids **Ceres** and **Vesta** are even lower in the south-west at magnitudes 9 and 8 respectively.

Meteor Showers

The Geminids peak on the night of the 13th/14th, but will be spoiled by a waning gibbous Moon close to the radiant (which is near Castor). The best time to watch will be after midnight. You can use binoculars to examine the persistence of any ionisation trails.

The Moon

Dec 02	1 st Quarter
Dec 10	Full Moon
Dec 18	3 rd Quarter
Dec 24	New Moon

Wishing you Clear Dark Skies,

Steve Tonkin for *The Binocular Sky*



Acknowledgments:

The charts in this newsletter were prepared with Guide v8.0 from <http://projectpluto.com>

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