

WATCH
Nov.7-Nov. 13, 2010

NASA photographs Hartley 2



The periodic comet Hartley 2 is now fading from view as it is moving farther away from the Earth and the Sun. Last week NASA's EPOXI mission flew past the comet. The 'Deep Impact' spacecraft passed as close as 700 kms from 103P/Hartley 2 on the 4th of November, 2010 (see pic).

Meanwhile, two observers in Japan independently discovered an 8th-magnitude comet, low in the eastern sky, just before dawn. Kaoru Ikeya spotted the comet with his 25-cm (10-inch) reflector at 39x, while Shigeki Murakami used a 46-cm (18-inch) reflector at 78x, as reported in IAU Circular 9175 of November 3 from the Central Bureau for Astronomical Telegrams.

This week, the Moon will be in



DEEP IMPACT: One of the several close-ups of the nucleus of comet 103P/Hartley 2, taken on November 4, 2010, by NASA's 'Deep Impact' spacecraft, showing the numerous jets of gas emanating from the elongated body.

western sky. On November 8, it will be seen just above Mars and Antares. Sky gazers should try to see Mercury just on the west horizon around 6.20 pm. The Moon will move from Scorpius to Sagittarius on November 9. You can observe the Moon in Capricornius on November 10. By the end of the week, on Saturday November 13, the Moon will be seen overhead and will set around midnight.

Venus, with a magnitude of -4.5, is rapidly emerging into view in the eastern dawn. Look for it low in the east-southeast as dawn begins to brighten. Above Venus can be seen the much fainter Spica and, higher up, Saturn.

Jupiter (magnitude -2.7, at the Pisces-Aquarius border) shines high in the southeast to south during evening. It's by far the

brightest star-like point in the sky. Through a telescope it's still a big 46 arcseconds wide.

Saturn (magnitude +0.9, in Virgo) glows in the east-southeast in early dawn, above a bright Venus and a dim Spica. The best time to try observing Saturn with a telescope is during the morning twilight, perhaps an hour before sunrise, when the planet will be less blurred by the low-altitude atmospheric mess. Saturn's rings have widened to 8° from edge-on.

Iridium flare : This Wednesday, November 10, at 7.15 in the evening we can see a bright Iridium flare in the south sky at around 30 degree altitude. One can locate this flare between Fomalhaut and Alnair.

— ANIRUDDHA DESHPANDE
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