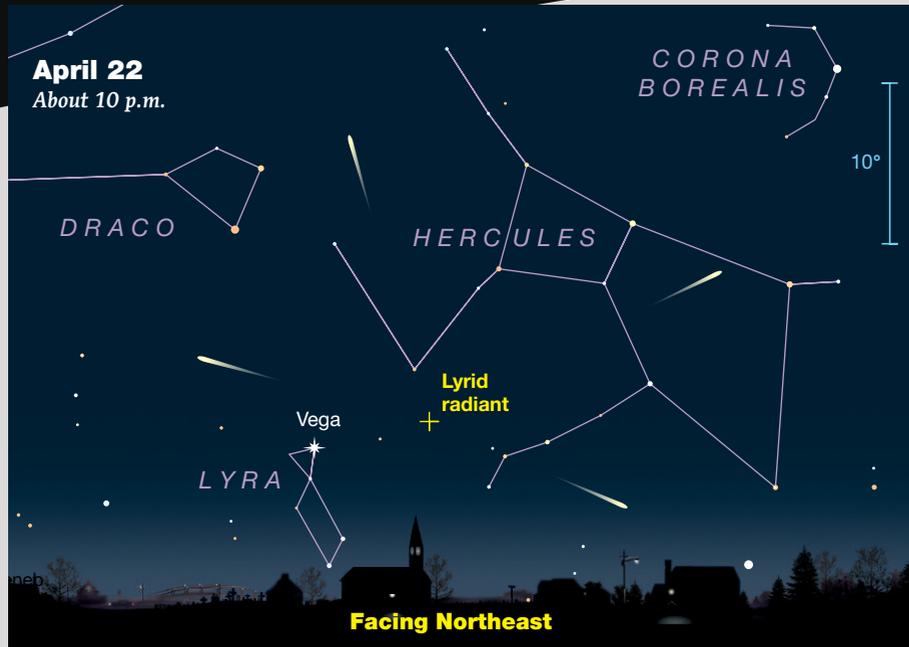


Lyrid Meteor Shower Peaks on April 22-23

APRIL 2023 OBSERVING
Celestial Calendar

Courtesy of Sky & Telescope



Looking for Lyrids

CIRCUMSTANCES COULDN'T BE better this year for the annual Lyrid meteor shower. The 9%-illuminated crescent Moon sets before midnight on **the peak night of April 22–23**, creating optimal conditions for this modest display. Shower members stream from

a point in the constellation Hercules, some 8° southwest of the bright star Vega, in Lyra.

While Lyra will be visible in the northeast around 10 p.m. local daylight time, the Lyrid display is best viewed between 2:00 a.m. and 4:30 a.m. on April 23rd, when the radiant stands highest and before twilight begins to noticeably brighten the sky.

Under dark conditions you can expect to see about 15 meteors per hour.

◀ With an early moonset, conditions for the 2023 Lyrid meteor shower couldn't be better. You can begin your meteor watch as early as 10 p.m. local daylight time on the evening of April 22nd, when twilight has fully faded and the radiant stands above the northeastern horizon. However, the best time to observe will be in the predawn hours of the 23rd when the radiant is nearly overhead for observers at mid-northern latitudes.

Outbursts with increased activity occur whenever Earth encounters denser streams of debris, as it did in 1803 and 1982. However, no similar enhancement is expected this year. Lyrid meteors generally don't have lingering trails, though the display is known for producing fireballs. The Lyrids originate from dust released by Comet C/1861 G1 (Thatcher), a long-period comet that circles the Sun every 415 years. It last reached perihelion in 1861 and will do so again in 2276.

One remarkable aspect of the Lyrids is that the display has been observed for more than 2,700 years. Although the radiant wasn't determined until the 1803 outburst, it's likely Chinese astronomers first recorded the shower as far back as 687 BC. I plan to set my alarm both for the pleasant show and to keep the chain unbroken. And if the display fizzles, at least I got to preview the summer sky.***