

## Sky Highlights for December

- December 1      The first of several planetary meetings; \* **see below**
- December 5      First quarter moon
- December 10-11    The moon occults the Pleiades
- December 12      Full Moon. This year, it's the Hunter's Moon
- December 13      Peak of the Geminid meteor shower; the moon washes out all but the brightest meteors
- December 19      Last quarter moon
- December 21      Winter solstice
- December 22      New moon

## Planets Visible This Month

**Mercury**— Visible at the end of the month, magnitude -0.7 in the west after sunset

**Venus**— A brilliant magnitude -4.2, Venus rises higher in the west after sunset

**Jupiter**— This is the last chance to see the Jupiter before it disappears behind the sun. Catch it low in the west in the early evening. Magnitude -2.0

**Saturn**— Rises around 1 am at magnitude +1.1. The rings are tilted a mere 1°, and will disappear completely later this year.

**Uranus**— Magnitude +6 in Aquarius. With a good star map, you can pick it up with binoculars.

**Neptune**— Not as bright as Uranus but only one constellation to the west, in Capricornus at magnitude +8

\* **NOTE:** This is a great time to see where planets got their name; "*planets*" is the Greek word for "wanderer". Jupiter gets lower in the western sky, while Venus rises constantly higher, and Mercury appears and passes Jupiter in the sky.

December 1    Jupiter and Venus are 2° apart, with a crescent moon nearby

December 29    Jupiter and Mercury are 2° apart, with Mercury now to the upper left of Jupiter, and a crescent moon nearby. Venus is now 25° to their upper left

\*\*\*\*\*