

The bright planet Jupiter has firmly taken control of the evening sky rising just before sunset in the southeast and, at least this evening, leading the Moon across the sky.

In the days following, the Moon will pull further east of Jupiter rising later and later each evening.

By the evening of Sunday, Oct. 24, the Moon will rise with the tiny Pleiades star cluster at about 7 p.m. MDT. This will be a good evening to watch the Moon as it makes its traverse of the sky.

It will travel under the Pleiades and be situated on their lower left by sunrise. If you check once each hour you will be able to mark the progress of the Moon against the background stars.

But, just as there is the positive of being able to watch the Moon go under the Pleiades, there is the negative that the Moon was full on Oct. 22, so may still be bright enough to wash out any view of the background Pleiades. That is where a nice pair of binoculars will come in handy.

Two more things, both are in the "Well, maybe" category. The first is the Orionid meteor shower which will peak on Oct. 21/22. The best time for observing is after midnight of the Oct. 21, and early in the morning of Oct. 22 when the constellation Orion will clear the eastern horizon.

The meteors are bits of Halley's Comet left behind on its many trips through the inner part of the solar system.

Normally the Orionid is a nice little shower, but this time the just-past-full Moon will be high in the sky and will probably wash out many of the bright streaks of the Orionid.

The second event, unfortunately, also will fall in the category of "blocked by the Moon" and that is the appearance of Comet 103P Hartley 2 in our evening skies.

The comet has been brightening over the past few days and there have been some reports it can now be seen with just the eyes alone from a very-dark sky place.

Today (Oct. 20) marks the comet's closest approach to Earth which would normally produce good visibility. However, that pesky Moon will be in the way again.

If you want to give it a shot, find your favorite dark sky place (since you will be out looking at the Orionids tonight anyway, why not take a peek) and find the constellation Auriga. It is a sort of oval shape with the bright star Capella on the top left side.

Auriga is below Perseus, above Gemini and to the upper right of Orion and stuck on the upper horn of Taurus, the Bull.

Contained within Auriga are three Messier objects, M35, M36, and M37. All are visible to the eye alone and even better through binoculars.

On the evening of Oct. 21 the comet will be to the left of M38 and in the same field of view in your binoculars. Over the next two evenings the comet will visit of each the other two objects, all being well with binocular field of view. Good hunting, let me know how it came out.

SKY WATCH: Full Moon Oct. 22. This is the Hunter's Moon. In days of old when the crops were cleared from the fields the hunters could seek small game to help provide meat for the winter. Traditionally this full Moon would give them light for the hunt.

NEXT WEEK: More astronomical blathering.