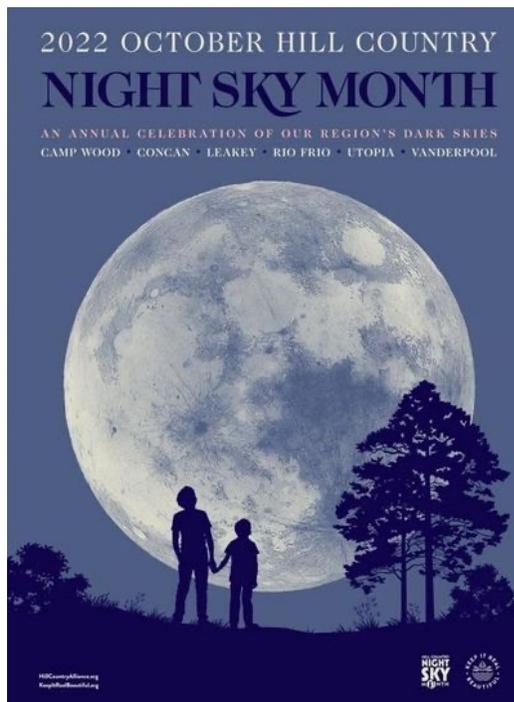


The Night Sky in October 2022

What's going on in the night sky this month?

Autumn is here. The days are getting shorter. The full moon occurs on October 9th and new moon is on the 25th. The week before the 25th would be the best time for stargazing the darkest skies in the early evening and a great time to be on the lookout for meteors. The Orionids meteor shower will next peak around Oct 20 to 21 with the moon only 20% full. Best viewing is during the hours before dawn. Mercury will be hovering above the hills to the east at sunrise in early October. Venus will likely be hidden behind both the morning and evening horizons transitioning from a morning star to an evening star. Mars will rise around 8 to 9pm. Jupiter will be rising before sunset and be overhead around 10 to 11pm. Saturn will be overhead at sunset and setting about midnight. For more information on upcoming meteor showers, check out <https://www.amsmeteors.org/meteor-showers/meteor-shower-calendar/>. Go catch some falling stars in October.



October is Hill Country Night Sky Month.

It's time to look to the heavens and howl at the autumn moon. Join others across the hill country this October by promoting awareness of our night sky. Sponsored by the Hill Country Alliance, see their website for more information (<https://hillcountryalliance.org/events/night-sky-month/>). Keep It Real Beautiful (KIRB) joins the celebration with a creation of our third annual poster for Night Skies. Pick up your 2022 Night Sky Month poster at the Friends of Garner Visitor Center, the Real County Public Library Leakey, or any KIRB Board member. Express to others your love for the night sky. Posters measure 18" wide by 24" high. The cost of the poster varies a little, as profits are shared with a few local partners, but start at \$10.

Real County is in the path of TWO solar eclipses.

The first eclipse is October 24, 2023, a Tuesday and only a year away! An annular solar eclipse passes over our area. The second and more complete eclipse, called a Total Eclipse, is Monday, April 8, 2024. For a little over 4 minutes between Noon and 1PM the land will go dark, and the stars will appear. See <https://hillcountryalliance.org/hill-country-eclipse-portal/> for more information. Many lodging and camping sites in the Frio Canyon are already booked. Make your plans early.

Our skies aren't as dark as they use to be.

New neighbors and new businesses mostly come from the city. They install lights to light up their properties and may not realize they are also contributing to light pollution in the process. From many areas in our county one can see the light domes of Uvalde, Hondo, Bandera, Kerrville, and yes, even Concan and Leakey. Let them know, "Illuminate only what is needed with only as much warm light as is needed."

Eighty percent of the world population has never seen the Milky Way.

Seeing the Milky Way requires fairly dark skies, skies that many don't ever see. Often before and after the new moon, while the moon is not shining, you can make out the Milky Way in our Real County skies. The Milky Way galaxy is made up of millions of stars. It is sometimes mistaken as a layer of clouds when first seen. The darker the skies the more magnificent the many stars stand out.

You can see a lot with your naked eyes or a set of binoculars

Early in the evening sky, start with finding our north star, Polaris, a bright star 30 degrees above the northern horizon. Look toward the northern horizon to find the Big Dipper below Polaris. Then following the handle of the Big Dipper, arc to Arcturus low on the western horizon. From there go towards your zenith, the sky straight overhead, to a bright star, Vega, seen before you reach the Milky Way. Vega is one of the stars of the Summer Triangle. See if you can also see the other two stars of the triangle, Deneb (part of the constellation Cygnus) and Altair (part of the constellation Aquila). If you have nice dark skies and can see more than a few stars of the Little Dipper, on your way from Arcturus to Vega, you will pass through a couple of dim star arrangements, The Northern Crown, and the Keystone of Hercules. The Great Globular Cluster of Hercules, also known as M13, is worth viewing with your binoculars. Also look through your binoculars between the constellation Aquila and the top of the teapot, Sagittarius, for numerous star clusters and nebula.

Happy Gazing!!!