

## **Draconid Meteor Shower 2011**

**from Tim Haymes**

Enhanced activity was seen from Knowl Hill, Berks - UK, based on 30min observing through a wide (30x40deg) gap in the cloud looking North, from 2000 to 2030 UT on Saturday night, 2011 October 8<sup>th</sup>.

I had been watching the meteor “pings” on the Normal Lockyer Observatory web site. There is a radio receiver at NLO picking up reflections from a radar transmitter 139 Mhz in Southern France. Although the weather had closed in over Maidenhead, I put my head outside the back door at 9pm (2000UT).

There was quite a large gap in the cloud, and as soon as I had sat down two meteors were seen radiating away from the dragon’s head. They were slow moving and about magnitude 3 and 2. I counted 10 meteors in 30minutes, six in the first 15 mins. A report was sent to John Mason, BAA Meteor Section.

He replied:

“Draconid rates were generally low until around 1900 UT on October 8, when a rapid increase in activity occurred, peaking between 2005 and 2015 UT. Thereafter there was a rapid decline, with Draconid meteor rates returning to a low level by 2130 UT. A very preliminary analysis of visual observations made by a group of observers led by the Director, observing from near Goreme in central Turkey, indicates that the peak equivalent ZHR was about 350 m/h between 2005 and 2015 UT, although correction factors are high due to the effect of bright moonlight. It is possible that lesser, short-lived secondary bursts in Draconid activity were also noted around 1915 and 1938 UT.

UK observers reporting included: Len Entwisle, Peter Gill (Eastbourne AS), Gerard Gilligan (Liverpool AS), Tim Haymes (Maidenhead AS), Brian Heath (Nottingham AS), Nick James, Gordon MacLeod, Bob Mizon, Alex Pratt, George Spalding and David Swain. “

The October Draconid shower is derived from Comet Giacobini. There were outstanding storms in 1933 and 1946, and lesser showers in 1926, 1952, 1985, 1998 and 2005. The stream encountered this year (2011) was formed in 1880, 1887, 1894 and 1900 (Source: Draconid Meteor Project 2011 [meteor@brtiastro.org](mailto:meteor@brtiastro.org) )

Unfortunately there were no other observation from Maidenhead or Reading because of the cloud cover – I was very lucky to get the clear spell just as the shower peaked although I didnt known at the time.

The morel of this story is: “never assume it is cloudy without looking first” !!

Note:

This is the third shower I have seen with enhanced activity

- 1) Perseids 1980 – up to 100 meteors per hour.
- 2) Leonids 1998 – a display of fireballs the night before maximum.
- 3) Draconids 2011

[ Nice Draconid images appear in the The Astronomer magazine Oct 2011]



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