

See What Galileo Saw

Information about Galileo-themed objects for IYA2009

the phases of Venus

Featured IYA object for January 2009. By observing the phases of Venus, Galileo concluded that Venus orbits the Sun - and not the Earth. Venus will be at greatest elongation in the evening sky in January 2009 (maximum elongation of 47° east of Sun on Jan 14th).

craters on the Moon

Featured IYA object for February 2009. Galileo made a series of Moon observations from November 30 to December 19, 1609. This demonstrated that objects in the sky were not perfect spheres. NASA's Lunar Crater Observation and Sensing Satellite (LCROSS) lunar impact is scheduled for later in the year of 2009. The impact plume is expected to be visible in medium-sized telescopes. Get updates at: lcross.arc.nasa.gov/news.htm

Saturn and its rings

Featured IYA object for March 2009. Galileo was not able to resolve the rings, and described them as "ears." Saturn will be well-positioned in the sky and the Saturn Observing Campaign (soc.jpl.nasa.gov) will be underway. Earth will cross Saturn's ring plane in early September, when the rings will be viewed "edge-on" from Earth.

the Sun and sunspots

Featured IYA object for May 2009. Galileo made a series of sunspot observations in 1612 and wrote his first letter about sunspots in May 1612. Also, the confirmation of general relativity happened during the solar eclipse May 1919.

star clusters

Featured IYA objects for June 2009. Galileo viewed the Pleiades through his telescope, discovering stars too faint to be seen with the naked eye. The Hercules Cluster, M13 - a globular star cluster - is prominent in June.

Jupiter and its moons

Featured IYA object for September 2009. Galileo first observed three "stars" near Jupiter on January 7, 1610. By January 15, 1610, he concluded that four objects were orbiting Jupiter, and could easily prove to others looking through his telescope that not all heavenly bodies orbit the Sun.

More information

You can find more information about these objects and associated activities in the monthly **IYA Discovery Guides** created by the Astronomical Society of the Pacific at: www.astrosociety.org/iya/guides.html

Classroom activities about the Moons of Jupiter and the Phases of Venus are at: www.astrosociety.org/education/slooh/teachers.html

Galileo: The Man and His Science, a listing of Galileo books, websites and videos: www.astronomy2009.org/static/organisation/galileo_resources_guide.pdf

Please visit the U.S. International Year of Astronomy website: www.astronomy2009.us
and the main International Year of Astronomy website: www.astronomy2009.org