

Nature features

You are in: [Berkshire](#) > [Nature](#) > [Nature features](#) > A star is born



A meteor shower

A star is born

Emma Midgley

Newbury astronomers will spend August 12 star-gazing as part of their 'meteor watch' on social networking site Twitter. Since its launch on Twitter, Newbury Astronomical Society has grown to include hundreds of thousands of people around the world.

BBC Radio Berkshire's Maggie Philbin visited Newbury Astronomy Society on the morning of August 12, just as the Perseid meteor shower reached its height.

[▶ See video of the meteorwatch on August 11, 2009 >](#)

[Help](#) playing audio/video

In the past year, Newbury Astronomical Society has expanded its membership from a tiny group of 30 or 40 people to hundreds of thousands of virtual followers, who have taken part in their Twitter 'moonwatch' and 'meteorwatch'.

"We got a feeling early on the meteorwatch was going to be big." said Adrian West of the Newbury Astronomical Society.

"It got bigger, and bigger. In the end we became one of the major trending topics on Twitter, which is quite amazing."

Maggie said that she had joined in with the Twitter meteorwatch on the night of August 11 while sitting out in her garden with a laptop, peering into the night sky.

"It felt wonderful to be part of something that thousands of people in the world were doing at the same time." she said.

[A guide to using Twitter >](#)

The Perseid shower occurs when the Earth passes through a stream of dusty debris from the comet Swift-Tuttle.

No special equipment is required to watch the sky show. Astronomers say binoculars might help, but will also restrict the view to a small part of the sky.

The Perseids can appear in any part of the sky, but their tails all point back to the radiant in the constellation Perseus.

In the UK, the best times to see the Perseid meteor shower in 2009 are likely to be on the morning of 12 August before dawn and from late evening on the same day through to the early hours of 13 August.