



Two hours before sunrise on December 15, 2009 Saturn is halfway up the sky in the southeast, as seen from my mid-northern latitude. Interestingly, it's exactly as bright as Spica, an icy-blue guidepost star, and dimmer than Arcturus to the north. Spica and Saturn are almost precisely first magnitude. However, Spica stays at that brightness, Saturn varies some in brightness depending on its distance from us and the Sun.