

CAS Sky Notes for February 2023

A quieter month!

Planets:

Mercury: Mercury is still a morning object throughout most of the month. However, as its declination is around -20° or worse, it will be very low in the sky and hard to see. It's probably best to wait until April to see it in the evening sky, when it will be better placed.

Venus: This is now an evening object and becoming increasingly easy to observe. It starts the month with a low declination of -11 degrees, but by the end it is nearly $+4$ degrees, making it significantly higher in the evening sky. Its magnitude remains around -3.9 throughout. The phase decreases from 90% to 85%, although the angular diameter increases only a little to 12 arc seconds.

Mars is now well past opposition, but is high in the evening sky. It reached opposition last December, but is still fairly well placed. The disc size isn't great and has now shrunk to barely 10 arc seconds. It is still worth trying to observe some surface features as the high altitude in the sky reduces the problems of turbulence. On the 28th February Mars will be just over 1 degree south of the moon before dawn.

Jupiter is still a very prominent object, but is rapidly descending towards the west after sunset, so make the most of it while you still can as you have barely a month left to see it. It reaches conjunction with the Sun in early April. Even a small telescope will show the belts and the 4 Galilean moons.

Saturn is now lost in the twilight. It reaches conjunction on the 16th February. It will become a morning object in the spring.

Uranus was at opposition last November, but is still observable in the south-west once it is dark. R.A. 2hr 50' Dec. $+15.9^{\circ}$ in Aries. If you have a star map, look it up and remember that Uranus lies on the ecliptic. In a small telescope it should appear as a tiny bluish disc. If you do any astrophotography, try to get a photo.

Neptune is now lost in the twilight, but on the 15th February it will be just 0.01° North of Venus, which may help you to locate it, although twilight might make that tricky.

5th February: Full Moon.

13th February: Moon is at last quarter.

20th February: New Moon

27th February: Moon is at First Quarter

Targets for Members:

1. Find the Orion nebula. It's in the 'sword' below the belt of Orion
2. Find Uranus – especially if you have never observed it before.
3. Find the Pleiades in binoculars.
4. Use binoculars or a small telescope to see M31 in Andromeda
5. Find the Double Cluster in Perseus. A beautiful sight in binoculars