

CAS Sky Notes for February 2024

Planets:

Mercury: Mercury is very poorly placed this month and reaches superior conjunction on the 28th February.

Venus: Venus is still a morning object. Its elongation drops to 25° by the end of the month. Its magnitude remains at -3.9 as the phase increases to 90% by the end of the month. The diameter decreases to around 11 arcsec during this month. Also, it remains well south of the celestial equator and so is low in the morning sky.

Mars: On the 22nd Mars will 0.6° S of Venus. That should make it easier to find.

Jupiter: Jupiter is still fairly well placed and visible throughout the evening. It is quite high in the sky and unmistakable. Look out for the 4 Galilean moons. Various websites will help you to identify them, www.shallowsky.com is worth using as it also shows the position of the Great Red Spot (GRS) and when it is visible.

Saturn is not observable this month as it reaches conjunction on the 28th February.

Uranus is well placed throughout February. It is situated roughly half way between Jupiter and the Pleiades and so is fairly easy to find. R.A. 03h 05m, Dec +17°. It lies to the west of the Pleiades. If anyone wants more details, please email Neil at coord@cotswoldas.org.uk

Neptune. Neptune is not really observable as it sets by 7pm. You may be able to find it on the 12th as it will be 0.7°N of the crescent Moon.

The Sun

Solar activity is still increasing and solar observations are a good idea. **Take great care to never look directly at the Sun, or directly through an optical instrument.**

Aurora Borealis: Increasing solar activity increases the chance of seeing an aurora. There are a number of Apps that can give you warnings and chances of seeing Aurorae. Mine is called *Aurora Pro*.

Meteor Showers: There are no prominent meteor showers this month, but watch out for sporadic ones at any time

Moon

2nd February: Moon is at last quarter.

9th February: New Moon

16th February: Moon is at First Quarter

24th February: Full Moon.

Deep Sky Objects: The Orion Nebula is an easy target throughout the night. It is the middle 'star' in the sword, below the belt of three stars. The Andromeda Galaxy (M31) is well placed as is our other neighbour, the Triangulum Galaxy (M33).

Astrophotography Challenge: Try to get a really good photo of the Double Cluster in Perseus. RA: 2h 20m Dec: +57.08, almost overhead. You don't need a powerful telescope, just a zoom lens as each cluster covers nearly 0.5°.