

CAS Sky Notes for March 2024

Planets:

Mercury: Mercury moves into the evening sky this month, having passed through superior conjunction on the 28th February. It also moves north of the celestial equator and becomes well placed later in the month. It reaches greatest eastern elongation of 19° on 24th March when it will be visible in the west after sunset. A week either side of the 24th may also see it relatively easy to find.

Venus: Venus is still a morning object, but is less well placed. Its elongation drops to 17° by the end of the month. Its magnitude remains at -3.8 as the phase increases to 96% by the end of the month. The diameter decreases to around 10 arcsec during this month. Also, it remains well south of the celestial equator and so is low in the morning sky.

Mars: It remains a difficult morning object throughout at magnitude +1.2 and diameter of 4.4 arcsec. Being well south of the equator renders it hard to find.

Jupiter: Jupiter is still visible in the western sky after sunset and early 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 has only just passed through conjunction.

Uranus is still observable. 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 is not observable this month

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

3rd March: Moon is at last quarter.

10th March: New Moon

17th March: Moon is at First Quarter

25th March: Full Moon**

**There will be a penumbral eclipse of the Moon on the 25th March. This occurs when the Moon passes through the fainter outer part of the Earth's shadow.

It enters the penumbra at 04:53m UT. The Moon sets at 06:01 UT and the end of the eclipse, at 09:32, is therefore not visible in the UK.

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° .