

## CAS Sky Notes for February 2026

Winter continues and the nights are long and dark. If we manage some clear skies, then this is a good time of year for observing.

### Planets

#### Mercury

Mercury becomes an evening object, reaching greatest eastern elongation on the 19<sup>th</sup> of the month, reaching 18° east of the Sun. It should be a good target to look for this month.

#### Venus

Venus becomes an evening object, but is still rather too close to the Sun to be easily observable this month.

#### Mars

Mars reached conjunction in January and is not observable this month, or for quite a few months yet.

#### Jupiter

Jupiter is just past opposition and is therefore observable throughout the night. It is a very prominent object in Gemini, just below the twin stars of Castor and Pollux. It is very well placed for observing and gets very high in the sky, meaning it avoids a lot of the atmospheric turbulence lower down. I recommend the website <https://shallowsky.com/jupiter> which shows you the position of the Galilean moons and the Great Red Spot at any time you pick.

#### Saturn

Saturn is becoming much harder to observe as it sinks into the west. It sets by 8pm by the middle of the month. The rings are still nearly edge on, but will just be visible if you get a chance to view them before Saturn is lost in the twilight.

#### Uranus

Uranus remains visible throughout this month. It lies in Taurus, a little below the Pleiades. Its coordinates: RA 03h 43m , Dec +19.5°, and magnitude +5.7.

#### Neptune

Neptune is becoming harder to observe, as it is close to Saturn, being a little above it. It sets by mid evening.

### Moon Phases:

**1<sup>st</sup> Feb:** Full Moon

**17<sup>th</sup> Feb:** New Moon

**9<sup>th</sup> Feb:** Last Quarter

**24<sup>th</sup> Feb:** First Quarter

### Sun

The Sun remains low in the sky at this time of year, but still fairly active as it is still near solar maximum, so do watch out for large Sunspot groups. Remember to **never look at the Sun directly without a proper solar filter**.

## **Aurora**

Aurora may be visible this month as the northern skies are dark early. Watch out for any exceptional activity though, using one of the many aurora alert apps.

## **Meteors**

There are no notable meteor showers this month.

## **Deep Sky Objects**

The **Orion Nebula** is well placed, as well as the **Pleiades**. To the east of Gemini (where Jupiter is) lies the sickle of Leo. Between these is Cancer. Look for the beautiful open cluster *Praesepe* M44, which is a lovely open cluster and a good target for astrophotography. I captured this inadvertently while photographing the aurora in northern Finland in December.

*The Andromeda galaxy* (M31) remains well placed, being almost overhead by mid evening. This also applies to the *Double Cluster in Perseus*. Both make great objects in binoculars or a small telescope and fantastic objects for astrophotography.

Neil Havard.

Any questions or for more information, contact Neil at [coordassist@cotswoldas.org.uk](mailto:coordassist@cotswoldas.org.uk)