

CAS Sky Notes for March 2026

Despite all the rain, spring must be on the way! If we manage some clear skies, then this is a good time of year for observing.

Planets

Mercury.

Mercury passes through *inferior* conjunction on 7th March and becomes a morning object. However, it will remain low in the sky and will be a very difficult object this month.

Venus

Venus is now an evening object, but is still rather close to the Sun and may be difficult to pick up before the end of the month. The disc diameter is only about 10 arcsec.

Mars

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

Jupiter

Jupiter is past opposition now, but is still well placed for observation in the early to late evening. 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 reaches conjunction with the Sun on 25th March and is therefore not observable this month.

Uranus

Uranus remains visible throughout this month. It lies in Taurus, a little below the Pleiades. Its coordinates: RA 03h 44m , Dec +19.7°, and magnitude +5.7.

Neptune

Neptune is not observable this month as it is too close to the Sun

Moon Phases:

3rd March: Full Moon

19th March: New Moon

11th March: Last Quarter

25th March: First Quarter

Occultations

On the 29th March, the Moon occults the star Regulus in Leo. It disappears behind the dark limb at 18:14 UT and reappears at the bright limb at 19:21 UT. The Moon phase is 89%.

There is a total lunar eclipse on 3rd March, but it will not be visible in the UK sadly.

Sun

The Sun is much higher in the sky now and is 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**.

The Equinox occurs on 20th March

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 still 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. The Whirlpool Galaxy (M51) is becoming well placed, below Ursa Major, as well as the Pinwheel galaxy (M101) just above the handle of the Plough.

The Andromeda galaxy (M31) remains fairly 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