



Island Planetarium

Monthly Sky Guide – March 2025

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Greetings Stargazers

We had a successful evenings viewing last month despite the high level cloud and windy weather. March is a very interesting month astronomically, including a Total Lunar Eclipse. Two other notable dates, the 20th marks the Vernal or Spring Equinox when there is equal Day and Night, i.e. 12 hours of each. On the 30th, the clocks go forward by one hour as we transition from Greenwich Mean Time(GMT) over to British Summer Time(BST).

Looking North, the familiar 'W' shaped Constellation of Cassiopeia dominates the sky, and nearby is a delightful sight. A beautiful open Double Cluster namely the Sword Handle Cluster best observed through a telescope with a low power, or good binoculars.

Looking South, the familiar sight of Leo is shaped like a Sickle, or reverse 'question mark', and the brightest star at the foot of the Constellation is Regulus. This is one of the few Magnitude One Stars that can be occulted, when the Moon appears to pass in front of it. Also, the twin stars of Gemini, Castor and Pollux are well placed for viewing. See if you can pick out M44, Praesepe, 'Beehive Cluster' in Cancer about midway between Pollux and Regulus, faint to the naked eye but wonderful in binoculars on a clear steady night.

The Moon will be Full on the 14th when an almost Total Lunar Eclipse will take place between 0357 and 0622 GMT from the UK. It will appear blood red as it enters almost totality, and is quite a sight with the naked eye or binoculars. New Moon for March will be on the 29th.

The Moon will be close to several Planets this month and produce Lunar/Planetary conjunctions. Moon and Venus on the 1st, Moon and Jupiter on the 6th, Moon and Mars on the 9th. These conjunctions are often a lovely sight to behold even with the naked eye alone.

Another effect with the Moon is when the Sun's light bounces off the white clouds of Mother Earth back out into space. This is picked up by the Moon and although the thin Crescent is sunlit, the unlit portion of the Moon is illuminated very slightly by the Earthshine effect. It is also known, rather affectionately as, The Old Moon in the New Moons Arms. See if you can spot it in the first few days of the new Lunar Cycle.

The International Space Station(ISS) continues to be an early morning object and you can track it by Googling 'ISS over UK' to checkout the times.

We plan to hold another Stargazing Evening on March 18th, when you can come along and use our Telescopes and Binoculars. Families and Friends all welcome.

Until next month, I wish you all clear skies and happy viewing.

John Ward
Amateur Astronomer
Island Planetarium