

March Skies

March will bring us a number of events beginning with the advent of Daylight Savings Time which will occur on Sunday the 11th. Remember to spring forward and set your clocks ahead one hour! On the 20th of March we reach the Vernal Equinox, the first day of spring in the northern hemisphere, at 6:07 PM Mountain Daylight Time.

But, to kick off the month, we will be able to witness the end of a total Lunar Eclipse on the evening of March 3rd. When the Moon rises in the Mountain Time zone totality will have ended but we will be able to observe the penumbral shadow until about 6:50 PM. Folks in the Eastern Time zone will see the moon rise totally eclipsed. Totality, for them, will begin around 5:44 PM. So, head east if you really want to see this eclipse!

The Moon will be full on the 3rd, last quarter on the 11th, new on the 18th and first quarter on the 25th. Twice during this month the Moon will pass within $^{\circ}$ of a degree of the planet Saturn. The first pass will be on March 1st at about an hour after sunset and again on the 28th at about 8:48 PM. On those evenings the Moon will provide a sure fire way to locate Saturn. Another pretty sight will be the crescent Moon just below and then just above the planet Venus on the evenings of the 20th and 21st.

Venus will continue to dazzle us as it climbs even higher into the evening sky. By the end of the month it will set a full three hours after the Sun! At magnitude -3.9 it will be pretty hard to miss as it shines high in the west-southwestern sky!

Saturn will continue to prominently shine high in the east in the early evening sky. During the month viewing through a small telescope will show its rings opening up a little more as well as being able to see 6 or 7 of its brightest moons.

Jupiter will come up around midnight by the end of the month and is situated well above and to the left of the bright star Antares in the constellation Scorpius. Look for both in the south-southeastern skies.

Mars will continue to be hard to spot as it comes up low in the east-southeast about one and three quarter's hours before sunrise. It will be a while before the Red Planet comes into prominence again.

On March 6th and again on the 21st there will be star parties at Etscorn Campus Observatory. On the 21st special guests will be students and their families from Zimmerly Elementary School. To reach the Campus Observatory take Canyon Road past the golf course. At the 4-way stop turn right on Buck Wolfe Drive and follow the signs to the observatory.

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