



Nene Valley Astronomical Society

Stargazer Newsletter

January 2018

www.neneastro.org.uk

Forthcoming NVAS Society Meetings

Monday 15th January: 'The Outer Planets' by John McEvoy. The follow up from John's talk to the group from last August. Chelveston Village Hall, Caldecott Road, Chelveston NN9 5AT at 8pm. Admission £3.

Thursday 1st February: 'The Hubble Space Telescope' - a retrospective look back at this famous telescope by Steve Williams. Sudborough Village Hall, Main Street, Sudborough at 8pm. Admission £2.

Monday 5th February: Club Night. Our informal meeting featuring the night sky guide and an evening of astronomical chat and discussion. Chelveston Village Hall, Caldecott Road, Chelveston NN9 5AT at 8pm.

Monday 19th February: 'A Celebration Of Tim Peake's Principia Mission' by Dave Eagle. An entertaining and audience participation presentation, looking at what Tim Peake got up to during his six month stay aboard the International Space Station. Chelveston Village Hall, Caldecott Road, Chelveston NN9 5AT at 8pm. Admission £3

Please note that there will be no Club Night Meeting at Chelveston or Sudborough meeting during January.

Note: Occasionally, it may be necessary to alter the speakers and or subjects at short notice. Where this is the case details will be posted on our website, Twitter and Facebook accounts.

Starnight Observing Sessions

Our weekly Friday evening observing sessions for 2018 will recommence at Chelveston Village Hall from the 5th January. Beginning at 8pm, they will be held on evenings when there is at the very least a reasonable prospect of observing. To confirm that a particular session is proceeding, please check the Twitter feed on our website from 6.30 on the evening for confirmation.

Speaker Organiser

We are pleased to welcome Kevin Burton who has recently taken over the role of Speaker Organiser from Peta Jellis. Kevin would welcome suggestions for future speakers & topics that you'd like to see at meetings. In the meantime we thank Peta for all of her hard work in this role over several years.



Globular Cluster M79 features in this image by the Hubble Space Telescope as released in December 2017.

Situated in the constellation of Lepus, this celestial stellar globe of starlight lies 41,000 light years from us.

The society was deeply saddened to hear of the passing of member Karen Wilson last November. Karen had supported the society for a number of years and was a regular attendee at meetings at Chelveston and Sudborough, as well as being a keen supporter of our public observing sessions at Stanwick Lakes.

The Astronomy Section of the Northamptonshire Natural History Society meet at 7.30pm at The Humfrey Rooms, Castilian Terrace, Northampton. Forthcoming meetings are on the 8th January ('Telescopic Topics') and 29th January when Prof. Paul O'Brien will be speaking on 'Using Nature To Observe The Universe in X-Rays'. For more information please visit www.nnhs.info



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Northamptonshire's Free To Join Astronomical Society



Sky Guide - January 2018

Full Moon On 2nd January & 31st January

New Moon On 17th January

The January evening sky continues to be devoid of naked eye planets, however there is still a chance to catch the icy giant Uranus before it disappears below the south-western horizon.

Uranus remains amongst the zodiacal stars of Pisces the Fish. At magnitude 5.8, the planet lies on the fringe of naked eye visibility from a dark site, however for most of us, binoculars are going to be required. To get the best views, search out Uranus as early as possible in the evening, whilst it is at its highest. By mid-January, the planet will set in the south-west around 12.30am and by the end of the month by 11.30pm. The Moon will lie to the south of Uranus on the evening of January 23rd.

The outermost planet, **Neptune** remains in the constellation of Aquarius. It is however very low down in the south-western sky after sunset, so is unlikely to attract much attention this month.

After putting on a dazzling display over recent months in the pre-dawn skies, **Venus** passes through Superior Conjunction on January 9th and is not on view this month.

The main planetary action this month is taking place in the south-eastern pre-dawn sky, with Mercury, Mars Jupiter before being joined right at the end of the month by Saturn.

The innermost planet, **Mercury** reaches Greatest Western elongation of 23 degrees on January 1st. You will of course need an unobstructed south-eastern horizon to spot Mercury, however at magnitude 0 at the start of the month, it is reasonably bright enough to be an easy spot in the morning twilight. At the start of January, Mercury rises at around 6.30am and at the time of the end of this apparition by mid-January at 7.00am. A very challenging observation of the very thin waning crescent Moon lying above and to the right of Mercury occurs on the morning of January 14th.

Mars & Jupiter spend the early part of January in close company culminating in their conjunction on the morning of 7th January. By mid-January both planets rise shortly after 3am, giving the chance for a reasonable observing spell of both planets. Jupiter is of course the brightest of the two at magnitude -1.9, its brilliant white point of light contrasting with the magnitude 1.3 reddish glow of Mars. The waning crescent Moon will lie above both planets on the morning of January 11th, creating a rather nice photographic opportunity.



Following Solar Conjunction last month, **Saturn** will start to emerge into the morning twilight during the last few days of the month. It will however be extremely low above the south-eastern pre-dawn horizon, making for a challenging observation.

For a couple of slightly different objects, why not see if you can locate the dwarf planet Ceres and Comet 2017 T1 Heinze.

Ceres reaches opposition on January 31st, shining at magnitude 7 placing it as a binocular object. Ceres tracks westwards from Leo into Cancer during the month.

Comet 2017 T1 Heinze passes within 33 million kilometres of us on the night of January 4th/5th, when it will be moving rapidly through the constellation of Camelopardalis. The comet will race across to the neighbouring constellation of Cassiopeia a couple of night later. As a predicted ninth magnitude object, it should be visible through a small telescope.

Finally this month, the annual **Quadrantid Meteor Shower** reaches maximum activity on the night of January 3rd/4th. Unfortunately the very near Full Moon will drown out all but the very brightest of this year's meteors which appear to radiate from a point in the now defunct constellation of Quadrans Muralis (northern Bootes).

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Stargazer Newsletter Is Compiled & Published
By Steve Williams.