

# Nene Valley Astronomical Society

## Stargazer Newsletter

May & June 2017

[www.neneastro.org.uk](http://www.neneastro.org.uk)

### Forthcoming Society Meetings

**Friday 5th May** - Star Night Observing Session at Chelveston Village Hall from 8.30pm. Our final observing session of the season. To confirm that conditions will permit observing, please check our Twitter feed from 6.30 on the evening.

**Monday 15th May** - 'Juno At Jupiter: The Mission And First Results' by Dr Jonathan Nichols at Chelveston Village Hall at 8pm. Admission £3.

**Thursday 25th May** - 'A History Of The Space Shuttle' by Steve Williams at Sudborough Village Hall at 8pm. Admission £2. Note that this replaces the usual meeting on the first Thursday of June.

**Monday 19th June** - 'Black Holes by Dr Marc Sarzi at Chelveston Village Hall at 8pm. Admission £3.

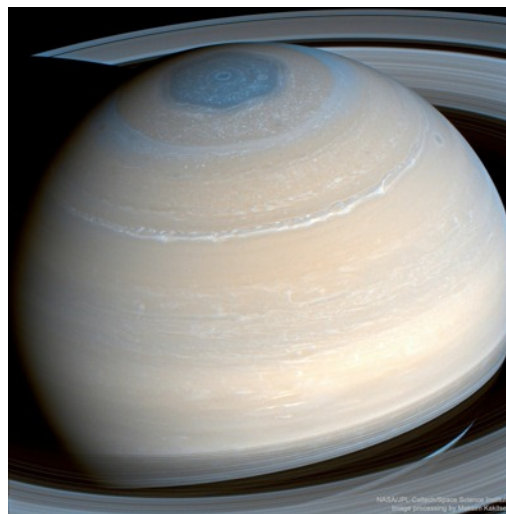
**Thursday 6th July**- 'Astronomical Aspects' Meeting at Sudborough Village Hall at 8pm. Admission £2.

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.

Following our recent Annual Review Meeting, it has been decided to issue a bi-monthly shortened Stargazer Newsletter moving forward. This will be supplemented by a new society journal which it is envisaged will be a glossy, full colour, A5 booklet featuring a mix of articles and members observations. Contributions for this are welcomed from all members and friends and can be forwarded to Steve Williams. It is hoped that the first issue of our journal will appear this coming September.

### Can You Help NVAS?

Your society is currently seeking a volunteer to take over from Peta Jellis to book visiting guest speakers for our Chelveston meetings from 2018. The role involves sourcing and booking around 8-10 external speakers per year, mainly via e-mail. For further information on this important role, or to volunteer, please contact either Peta or Steve.



The Cassini spacecraft continues to return spectacular images of Saturn. In this recently processed image taken in infra-red light, the famous North Pole Hexagon is clearly defined as are the structures in the cloud deck. The Cassini mission is currently decreasing its orbital distance as the mission nears its end in September this year. More at [saturn.jpl.nasa.gov/](http://saturn.jpl.nasa.gov/)

Recent guest speakers to the society have seen Dave Eagle visit us in February to speak on 'Pluto & Charon' in which he showed us a variety of images taken by the New Horizons probe including some recently processed ones.

In March, Nick Hewitt visited us to speak to us on 'Exploring The Shapes Of Planetary Nebulae'. Our thanks go to both speakers for their presentations and time.

Dave Eagle is running a one day Solar Observing & Imaging Workshop at Chelveston Village Hall on 3rd June. For further information and booking go to [eagleseye.me.uk](http://eagleseye.me.uk).



Follow The Nene Valley Astronomical Society on Twitter and like us on Facebook!

Northamptonshire's Free To Join Astronomical Society



## Sky Guide - May & June 2017

**Full Moon** On 10th May & 9th June

**New Moon** On 25th May & 24th June

The innermost planet **Mercury** spends much of May and June unfavourably placed for observation from our vantage point in the UK. Technically a morning object in May, it is lost in the long twilight. Superior Conjunction is reached on 21st June.

In contrast to difficult Mercury, the dazzlingly bright **Venus** is an unmistakable addition to the pre-dawn Eastern sky. Although it rises only around an hour or so before the Sun during May, it will be better placed during June at magnitude -4.3. Through a telescope you will be able to track the phase of Venus as it 'grows' from a 30% crescent to over 65% by the end of June. Our Moon will pass close to Venus on the mornings of 22nd & 23rd May and then again on the 20th & 21st June, making for a great naked eye view as well as an astrophotographic opportunity.

**Mars** is now approaching the end of its appearance in the evening sky. Look low in the west as twilight fades each evening, however the red planet is far from conspicuous, being at magnitude +1.6 and setting just after two hours after the Sun at the start of May. On the evening of 5th May, Mars can be found within six degrees of the first magnitude star Aldebaran in the constellation of Taurus. By the end of May, Mars is setting in the twilight by 10pm, bringing to an end its apparition in the evening sky.

In contrast to Mars, **Jupiter** dominates the southern part of the evening sky. Visible against the stars of the constellation of Virgo, the giant planet is the brightest object in that part of the sky and is certain to be attracting the attention of planetary aficionados through May and June. For naked eye observers, our own Moon provides the entertainment passing just over a degree to the North of Jupiter on the late evening of 7th May and is close by again on 3rd June. Binoculars (particularly if tripod mounted), will let you view the ever changing nightly positions of the Galilean satellites. Telescopic observers will be able to view the various cloud belts and the Great Red Spot as the planets rapid rotation offers an ever changing vista. As we move into June, the planet confines itself to the south-western quadrant of the evening sky but remains nicely placed for viewing.

*Below: Jupiter imaged on 20th March 2017*



*Above: The area around the lunar crater Archimedes*

The lovely ringed planet of **Saturn** is a morning object as we begin May, however is rising just before mid-night in the south-east by the time we reach the middle part of May and is above the horizon by 10.30pm at the end of May. Saturn is visible amongst the stars of Ophiuchus, low down in the south and does not attain a great elevation above the southern horizon. It's bright creamy hue will however make it recognisable. Opposition is reached on 15th June when the planet will be visible throughout our short twilight nights. Any size of telescope will reveal the wonderful ring system, beautifully presented in our line of sight, which the NASA Cassini space probe is currently studying close up. Our Moon will appear nearby on the nights of 14th May and 9th June.

The distant icy giants of **Uranus** and **Neptune** are technically visible low in the south-eastern predawn sky, however they are not really that accessible at present.

For meteor observers, the **Eta Aquarids** reach maximum on the night of 5th & 6th May. This meteor shower is best observed when its radiant has risen in the early hours. The meteors from this shower are debris left by Comet Halley.

There are no other significant meteor showers of note during this period, although the Alpha Scorpiids and Ophiichids are active, the radiant's are poorly placed for us in the UK.

The Nene Valley Astronomical Society  
Stargazer Newsletter Is Compiled & Published  
By Steve Williams.