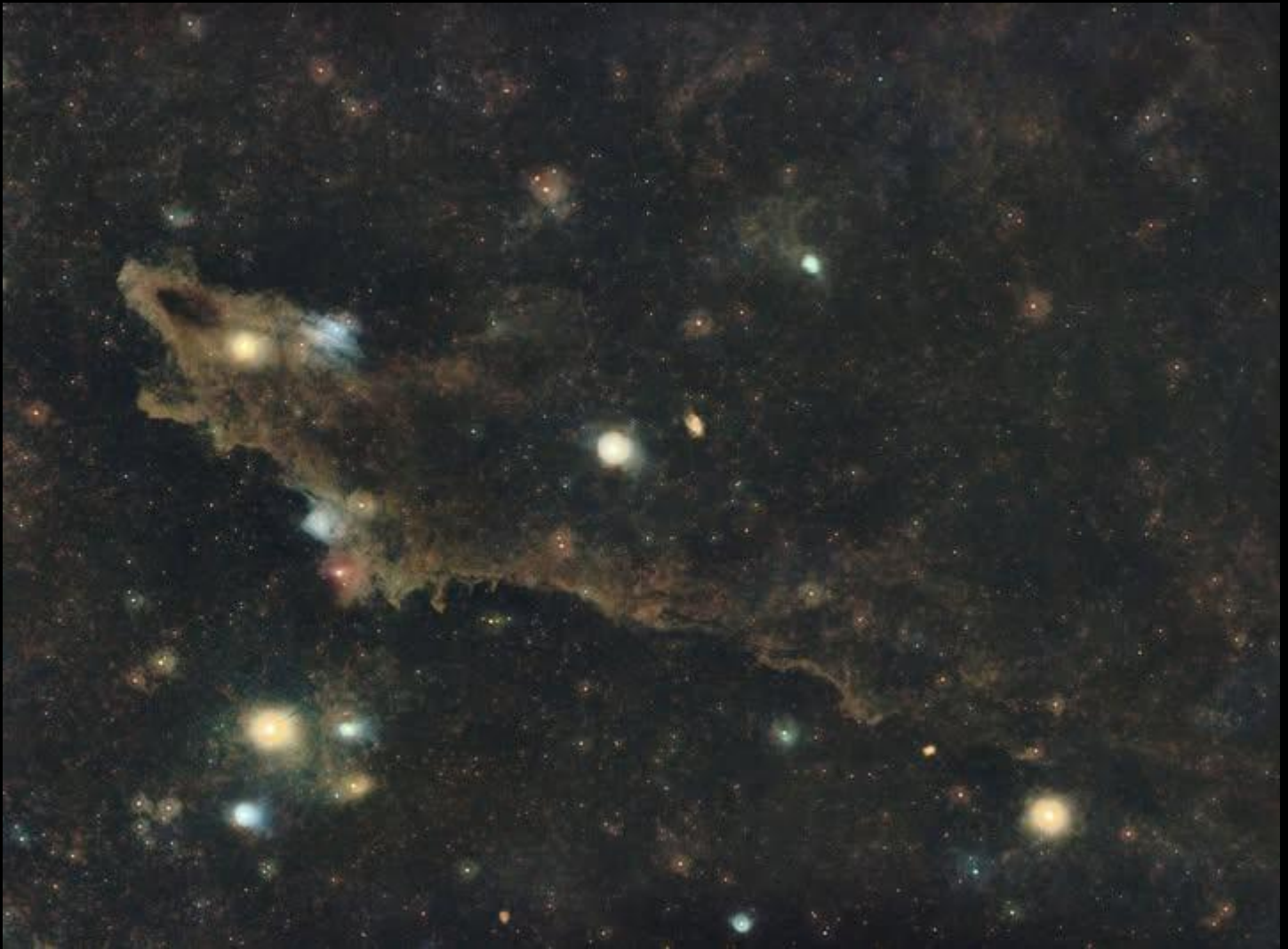


Nene Valley Astronomical Society

STARGAZER

APRIL 2026



The Dark Shark Nebula In Cepheus

Imaged By David Bryant. Total of Seven Hours of Exposures (140x3 minutes)

www.neneastro.org.uk

Forthcoming Meetings

All meetings held at Chelveston Village Hall, Caldecott Road, Chelveston NN9 5AT at start at 8pm. Doors open from 7.45pm. Please use the entrance doors at the rear of the building (the front door is locked for security purposes).

Monday 6th April

Easter Monday – No meeting.

Monday 20th April

Guest Speaker Meeting
Mary McIntyre
'Photographing The Milky Way From The UK'
Admission £6.

Monday 4th May

May Day Bank Holiday – No meeting

Monday 16th March

Guest Speaker Meeting
Dr Nial Tanvir
Subject TBA
Admission £6.

Committee Members

Chair

Vacant

Vice Chair

Steve Williams

Secretary

Kevin Burton
enquiries@neneastro.org.uk

Events Co-Ordinator

John Wynn-Wernick

Membership Secretary

Paul Blackman
members@neneastro.org.uk

Treasurer

David Jones

Newsletter/Website

Steve Williams
newsletter@neneastro.org.uk

Committee Member

Paul Jamison

Observing Evenings

Unfortunately, due to the very poor weather conditions experienced on Friday evenings, we have yet to have a successful observational evening this year. We have two more attempts this month on the 10th and 17th April, before the evenings become too light.

To confirm that conditions are expected to permit observing, Paul Jamison now operates an alert service through Whatsapp.

To sign up to this service, please text Paul with your name and mobile number to xxxxx xxxxxx

Observing sessions take place in the Car Park at Chelveston Village Hall from 8pm. Please note that we do not have access to the indoor facilities on these evenings.

NVAS Facebook Page

We'd like to encourage more members to post their astronomical images and news to the group Facebook Page. If you'd like to participate, then please speak to Steve Williams who can arrange access.

Meeting Preview – Monday 20th April

Mary McIntyre is an Oxfordshire based amateur astronomer, astrophotographer, speaker, author and podcast co-host who has had a life-long interest in Astronomy.



She is passionate about astronomy outreach and has been giving talks on Astronomy and Astrophotography since 2015 to a mixture of camera clubs, astronomy societies, local schools and Scouts groups, as well as running astronomy sketching workshops.

A much in demand speaker, this will be Mary's third talk to the NVAS, where she will be giving us some advice on Photographing The Milky Way.

The Solar System This Month

Full Moon 2nd April
New Moon 17th April

The Sun was continuing to show a good amount of sunspot activity at the end of March. There were however a few spotless days last month, another sign that solar maximum is now passed. The chance of auroral activity is though still quite high, so it's worth keeping an eye out on the auroral alert services.

Mercury is technically a morning sky object, reaching greatest western elongation on 3rd April. This is a poor apparition for us in the UK and the innermost planet is unlikely to be seen in the morning twilight.

Venus is visible in the western evening sky but is quite low down. It is however an easy spot, particularly with a clear horizon, due to our neighbouring worlds brightness (magnitude -4). The young crescent Moon lies to the lower right on the evening of 18th April.

Mars despite having reach Superior Conjunction back in January, remains lost in the solar glare and unavailable for view. It will be another couple of months before it will be visible in the morning sky.

Jupiter continues to be the main planetary target this month. Visible high in the south-west as twilight fades, Jupiter remains amongst the stars of Gemini. Mid-evening observing will be best whilst the planet is high in the sky. The Moon lies above Jupiter on the evening of 22nd April.

Saturn remains lost from view at present. Like Mars it will be another couple of months before it re-appears into the pre-dawn sky.

Uranus is visible just to the south of the Pleiades star cluster in Taurus, low in the north-west in the early evening. Watch for a close conjunction with Venus on 23rd April

The Evening Sky This Month



The above chart from Stellarium shows how the evening sky looks on April 1st at mid-night, April 15th at 11pm and April 30th at 10pm. Planetary positions are shown for mid-month.

April is famed for galaxy observing, as from our vantage point we are looking directly out of the Milky Way. Leo which transits the southern meridian at the time of our chart is home to a number of galaxies within range, including M95, M96 and M105 which can be observed in the south of the constellation. Additionally, slightly further east can be found M65, M66 and NGC 3628.

Towards the south-east of Leo lies the constellation of Virgo which is host to the Virgo Galaxy Cluster. One of the brightest members is M87, a giant elliptical galaxy, whilst nearby are M84, M86 and M60. Slightly to the south of these is M49 another giant elliptical galaxy of the eighth magnitude.

Between Leo and Virgo, lies the fainter constellation of Coma Berenices. Another popular galactic hunting ground hosting M64, M85 and M100.

If galaxies are not your thing though, there are still plenty of other deep sky objects to view this month. Round towards the north-east, Hercules is rising bringing with it the globular clusters M13 and M92. Whilst high overhead lies Ursa Major which contains the Owl Planetary nebula.

The faint constellation of Cancer can be found high in the south-west, where the M44 and M67 star clusters can be found.

As we move towards the end of April, the period of astronomical darkness decreases at a rapid rate, so be sure to make the most of any observing opportunities in the meantime!

Neptune, remains lost in the solar glare throughout this month and is not observable.

Meteor Showers – The Lyrids reach maximum on the night of 21st/22nd April. Associated with Comet Thatcher it typically produces 10-20 meteors per hour and is best viewed in the early morning hours. Moonlight will not interfere.

Comet PanSTARRS (C/2025 R3) is visible for a short while as morning twilight breaks. It's tracking southwards through the square of Pegasus, meaning it'll become lost from view by around mid-month. Currently around sixth magnitude and may brighten by another two or three magnitudes.

Comet MAPS (C/2026 A1) is a sungrazer comet. It may be visible in the western evening sky from around 9th April if it survives perihelion passage. It can currently be seen in the SOHO Chronograph images and will be interesting to see what happens.

Contributions for the next edition of Stargazer are welcome from all members and can be sent to Steve Williams via newsletter@neneastro.org.uk

Update On The NVAS Journal

As mentioned in the February edition of Stargazer, we were hoping to have produced the first edition of the NVAS Journal by now. Unfortunately, contributions for this have been very limited and it's not been possible to produce the first issue as planned. We still hope to introduce the Journal, but this will now be delayed until later in the year.

Contributions for the Journal can still be sent to newsletter@neneastro.org.uk

Members Observations



IC443 The Jellyfish Nebula imaged by Paul Blackman using a Dwarf 3 Smart Telescope



Jupiter As Imaged By Paul Blackman on 18th March 2026 through a Celestron 9.25 inch telescope.