

# Dundee Astronomical Society

## Sky Notes for March 2017

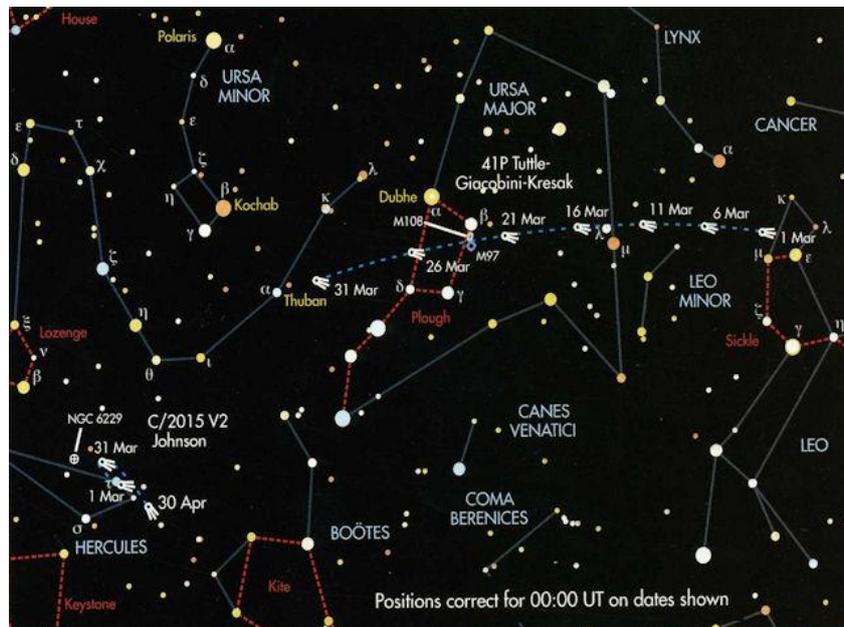
Sky Map for 15<sup>th</sup> March 22:00



Illustration Courtesy of [www.heavensabove.com](http://www.heavensabove.com)

As the nights shorten and the days grow longer, let's find out what we can see this month.

Comet 41P/Tuttle-Giacobini-Kresak is visible in our Northern skies. On the 1<sup>st</sup> of the month just above the "nose" of Leo and at mag +10, you will need a small to medium scope to view (see illustration). By the 28<sup>th</sup> of the month 45P will be just above Dubhe in Ursa Major and should be easily spotted in binoculars, so keep an eye open and the cameras ready. Comet C2015 V2 Johnson will be traveling south to north then doubling back on itself at the end of March. Rather than describe its path, have a look at the illustration below (courtesy of Sky at Night Magazine) for dates etc. Good hunting!



*Graphic courtesy of Sky at Night Magazine*

Other areas to search for interesting objects is Virgo (just to the East of Leo). Inside the Bowl of Virgo is a region called The Realm of Galaxies where there reside several huge galaxy clusters. You will need a telescope to find them so go get them.

Sadly, Altair in The Summer Triangle is now below the horizon for us, but if you're quick you can still catch a glimpse of M27 The Dumbbell Nebula and not forgetting M57 The Ring Nebula in Lyra.

## **The Planets**

**Mercury** Look for mercury in the evening sky, being well placed from the middle of the month

**Venus** Can be seen in the evening at the start of the month, but a morning object after the 25<sup>th</sup>.

**Mars** Still visible in the evening, and close to the moon on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> of the month.

**Jupiter** Located in Virgo and lying above Spica, Jupiter rises at approximately 21:30.

- Saturn**            Now a morning object.
- Uranus**           Visible in the evening but will be lost to view by the end of the month.
- Neptune**          Unfortunately not visible this month.

**The Moon**

- First Quarter**            5<sup>th</sup> March
- Full Moon**                12<sup>th</sup> March, this full moon was known by early Native American tribes as the Full Worm Moon because this was the time of year when the ground would begin to soften and the earthworms would reappear.
- Third Quarter**            20<sup>th</sup> March
- New Moon**                28<sup>th</sup> March

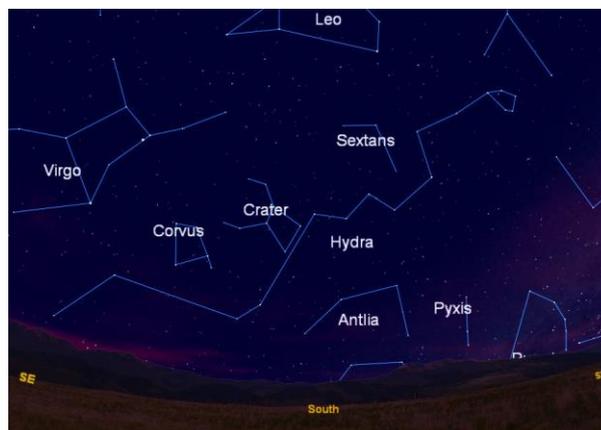
At the end of the month the moon will be sitting between the Hyades and the Pleiades, look out for this, and hope the skies are clear.

Equinox occurs on the 20<sup>th</sup> March

**Jim’s Focus of the Month**

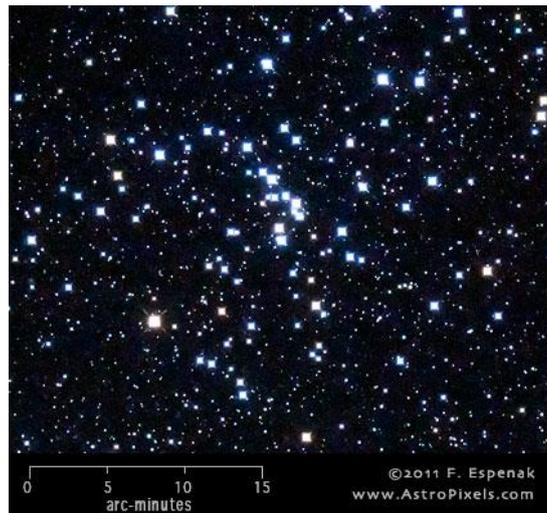
**Hydra the Water Snake.**

In the southern hemisphere, Hydra is best seen in autumn, while in the northern hemisphere it can be seen from January to May. Look for the constellation just below Cancer where its head is located, and follow it onwards to a point lying between Centaurus and Libra, where its tail terminates. This not going to be an easy one to see, but let’s go for it. Hydra the constellation is usually associated with the second of Heracles’ labours in Greek mythology. Hydra was a giant multi-headed creature fathered by the monster Typhon and Echidna, who was half-woman, half-serpent.



There are three Messier objects in the constellation that can be viewed, two of which are very close to the horizon and will be a challenge to see.

M48 is a large open Cluster below and to the east of Procyon, with a magnitude of +5.8 should be easily seen in a medium telescope.



M68 is a Globular Cluster (magnitude 7.3) which is very near to the horizon and you will need at least a 6 – 8" telescope to view, of course a very good vantage point and clear horizon is essential as it will only be accessible for a very short time.



Finally, M83 a closed Spiral Galaxy, also known as the Southern Pinwheel Galaxy, which again is very close to the horizon and with a magnitude of +7.54 will be difficult to see and will require a medium to large telescope and a good clear unobstructed view to the horizon.



### **A Challenge!**

- A Look for the crescent Moon, (using Binoculars or Telescope), identify where the moon is separated between the light and dark areas (the Terminator). Take an image if you can and describe it at one of our meetings in March.
- B Look for Comet 41p Tuttle-Giacobini- Kresak and see if you can spot it, note the time and the comet position, or image if you can. Hint – it is close to Ursa Major, look at the sky map for its location.
- C Find a dark site and see if you can see the Milky Way.
- D Find M45 (The Pleiades). How many stars can you see with the naked eye, then look again using Binoculars.
- E Finally find Algieba in Leo. At magnitude +2.2 it is a naked eye star, but better to look through binoculars or telescope, Algieba is a double star. See if you can spot this, even better try and take an image.

### **Did You Know?**

6<sup>th</sup> March 1986, USSR's Vega 1 probe flies by Comet Halley returning the first close-up pictures

8<sup>th</sup> March 1987, Japanese spacecraft Suisei flies past Comet Halley.

6<sup>th</sup> March 1926, Robert Goddard American Physicist launches the first liquid fuelled rocket.

29<sup>th</sup> March 1974, Mariner 10 makes its flyby of Mercury, returning the first pictures of the planet.

*Jim Barber*

**Director of Observations**

**Dundee Astronomical Society**