



Newsletter March 2023

Next Meeting: **Monday 27th March at 7pm**

Location: **Kyle Academy,
Overmills Road,
Ayr KA7 3LR**

**Topic: Celestial Navigation
by Master Mariner Robert Stewart**

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Presidents Word

Well an interesting month for observing. The conjunction of Venus and Jupiter and some amazing aurora. All that plus Mars and what did I manage to see? You would be forgiven for thinking nothing, as usual, but no! this time, because for at least for least part of the month, I was not in bonny cloud covered Fenwick. So, I did miss the fantastic aurora, having to rely on the posts from our aurora group which, by the way, were stunning, but I did get clear skies and each night on my way to the restaurant followed closely the movement of Venus and Jupiter, very impressive. I even managed to interest some of my fellow holiday makers amid the all-inclusive cocktails. How's that for dedication?

Earlier in the month I also got to see some nice sun spots and a couple of good prominences using the Society's solar scope courtesy of Stephen, our Treasurer, when we finally got to give a talk at his son's school in Ardeer. I say finally, as Stephen had been trying to arrange a date with school since COVID times. It went well although my voice was all but gone by the end of the day. Later in the month we did a talk on "The Moon and Getting There" at Fenwick primary, having been invited back following our last visit before COVID. Again it went well and it gave us a chance to show off our selection of model rockets.

Looking forward to the coming months we have a talk on Dark Matter and Dark energy in April and in May we have the AGM. The AGM is an important if not overly thrilling event as it will select the people who will run the Society for the following twelve months. Unfortunately, as with many societies and clubs, it tends to be the same dedicated few year on year, mainly due to lack of volunteers. Whilst it is rewarding to see the Society flourish due to one's efforts it is also nice to have the chance to sit back and simply attend the meetings. New leadership is also of benefit since it brings new ideas and that brings change and interest producing a vibrant Society. All positions are available, there is no guaranteed succession other than that the Vice President normally succeeds the President. So please give a thought to volunteering and helping to run your Society pass your name to our secretary Angela, Stephen or me.

Finally this month we have a new speaker: Master Mariner Robert Stewart who will talk to us about "Celestial Navigation" make sure you take your seat early!

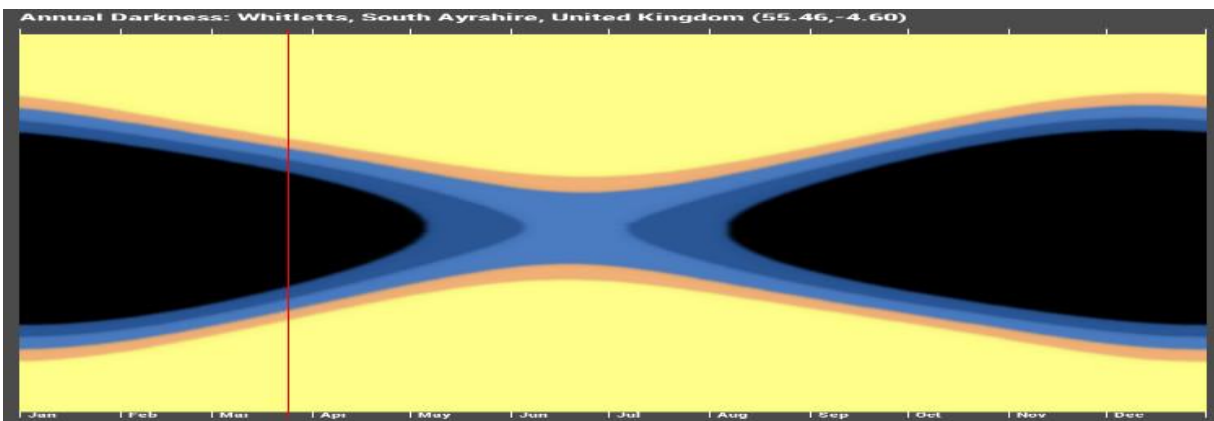


March/April Observing

General

Galaxy season is well and truly on, with Leo and Virgo well placed for viewing in early to late evening. Some of the winter constellations remain well placed like Auriga and Gemini, and Ursa Major is also well placed for observation. This while some of the more summery constellations like Hercules, Lyra, and Cygnus begin to make their appearance in the eastern sky, so globular cluster season is almost upon us. The Aurora is back and with increased activity on the sun leading up to the solar maximum in 2025, there should be plenty of opportunities to see it. For predictions check out: <https://aurorawatch.lancs.ac.uk/>.

We are now into the spring time sky and from our location in Scotland we have our last month and a half of astronomical darkness, so if it is clear, please do make the most of it.



Clear Outside https://clearoutside.com/annual_darkness/55.46/-4.60

Planets

Of the planets Venus and Mars are the planet best placed for viewing over this period, Venus will get higher in the sky and will pass within 2 and ½ degrees from the Pleiades on the 10th of April, while Mars will be moving upwards through Gemini, but it will be less than six arcseconds in diameter, so it is less of an inviting target. Mercury, however, will be making an appearance in the dusk sky in early to mid-April, with its greatest elongation on the 11th of the month. Uranus is also visible early in this period, but is quickly lost in the sun's glare, as is Jupiter. Saturn is low in the morning sky and difficult to observe, and Neptune lost in the sun's glare.

Comets

Comet C/2022 E3 (ZTF) but has faded quite a bit. It will remain observable for the at the beginning of this period as it is to the lower right of Rigel, but it will continue to sink in the sky rendering unobservable shortly afterwards.

Meteor Showers

The main meteor shower for April is the Lyrids which run from 14th to the 30th of April, peaking in the early morning of the 23rd, the moon will be just past new so won't pose a problem for the shower.

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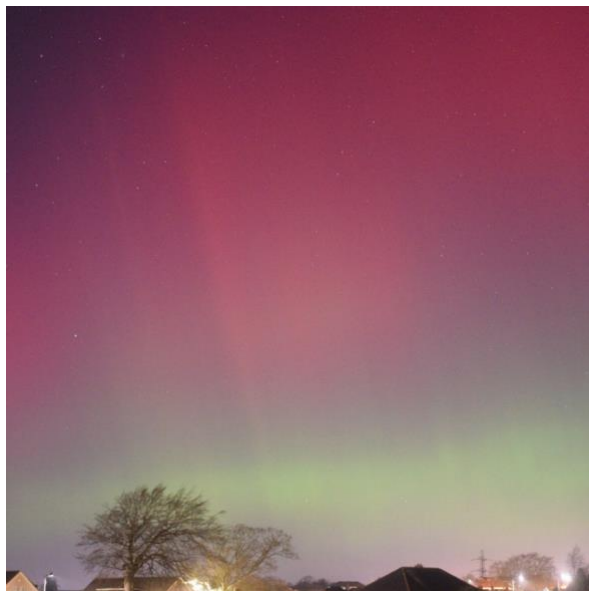
Consult <https://www.heavens-above.com> for specific times and location. April is a good month for solar transits, with some visible from or near Ayr on the 6th, 7th, 10th and 11th. Check out <https://transit-finder.com/> for details and any possible solar and lunar transits.



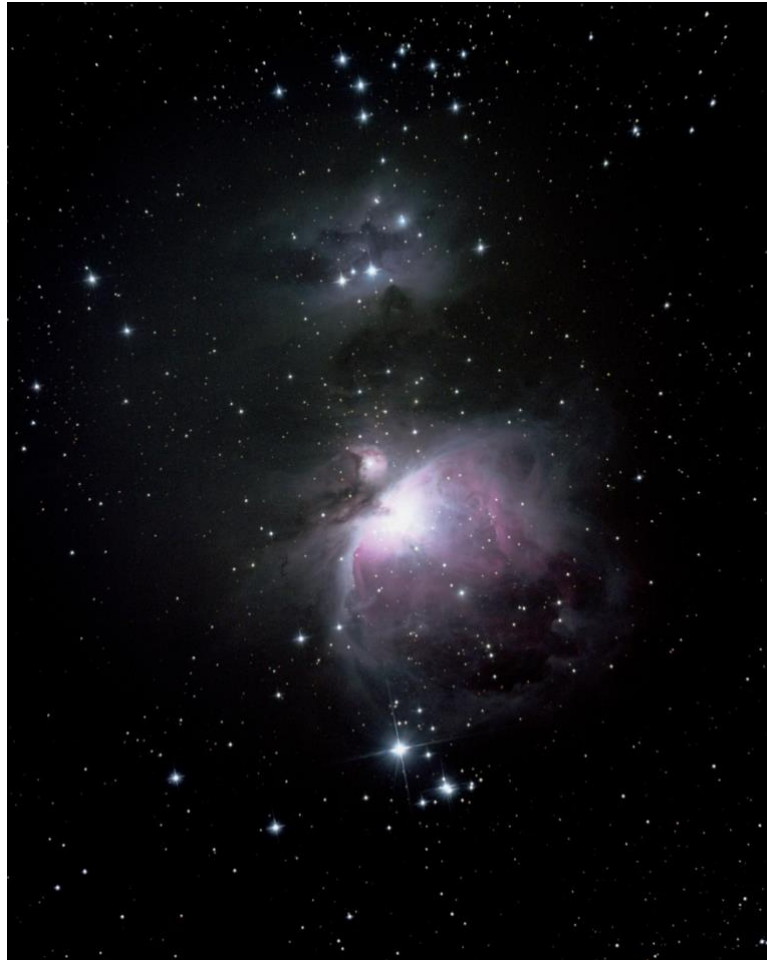
Member Images

Images by Marc Charron

The biggest surprise of the last month was the amazing Aurora display on the 26th of February.



Last month I included an image of the Orion Nebula taken with the TMB 130/1200, this month here is one taken with a six inch f4 Newtonian operating at f3 using a Starizona 0.75x coma corrector/reducer. Because of the wider field of view the whole sword of Orion is visible, including the Running Man Nebula (NGC 1977) which is clearly present above the main part of the Orion Nebula (M42).



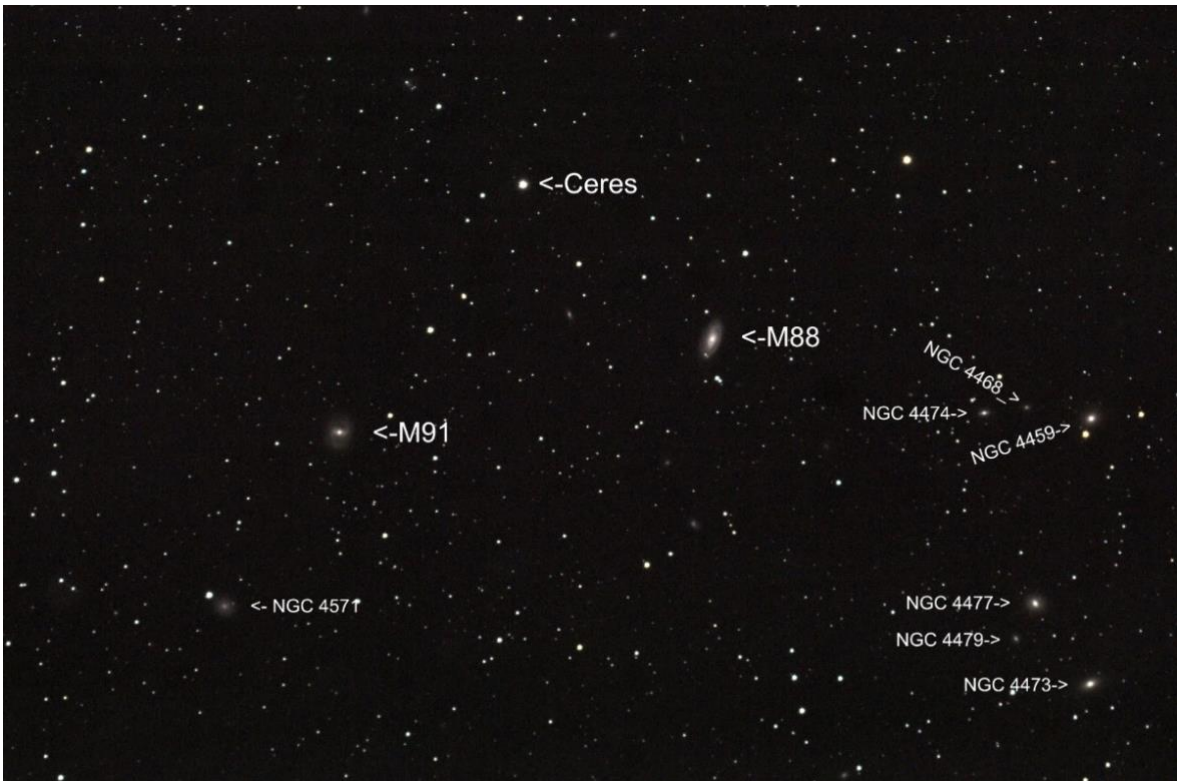
Here is one of my last images taken of the comet C/2022 E3, shot on the 24th of February with my six inch Newtonian at f3. As can be seen the comet has faded quite a bit and will continue to do so, as it heads out into deep space.



On March the 1st Jupiter and Venus were in conjunction at only 38 or 39 arcminutes apart, taken with a telephoto lens the four Galilean moons are visible, going from top left to bottom right they are Calisto, Ganymede, Io and Europa. Io is showing a bit of a green flash due to atmospheric refraction.

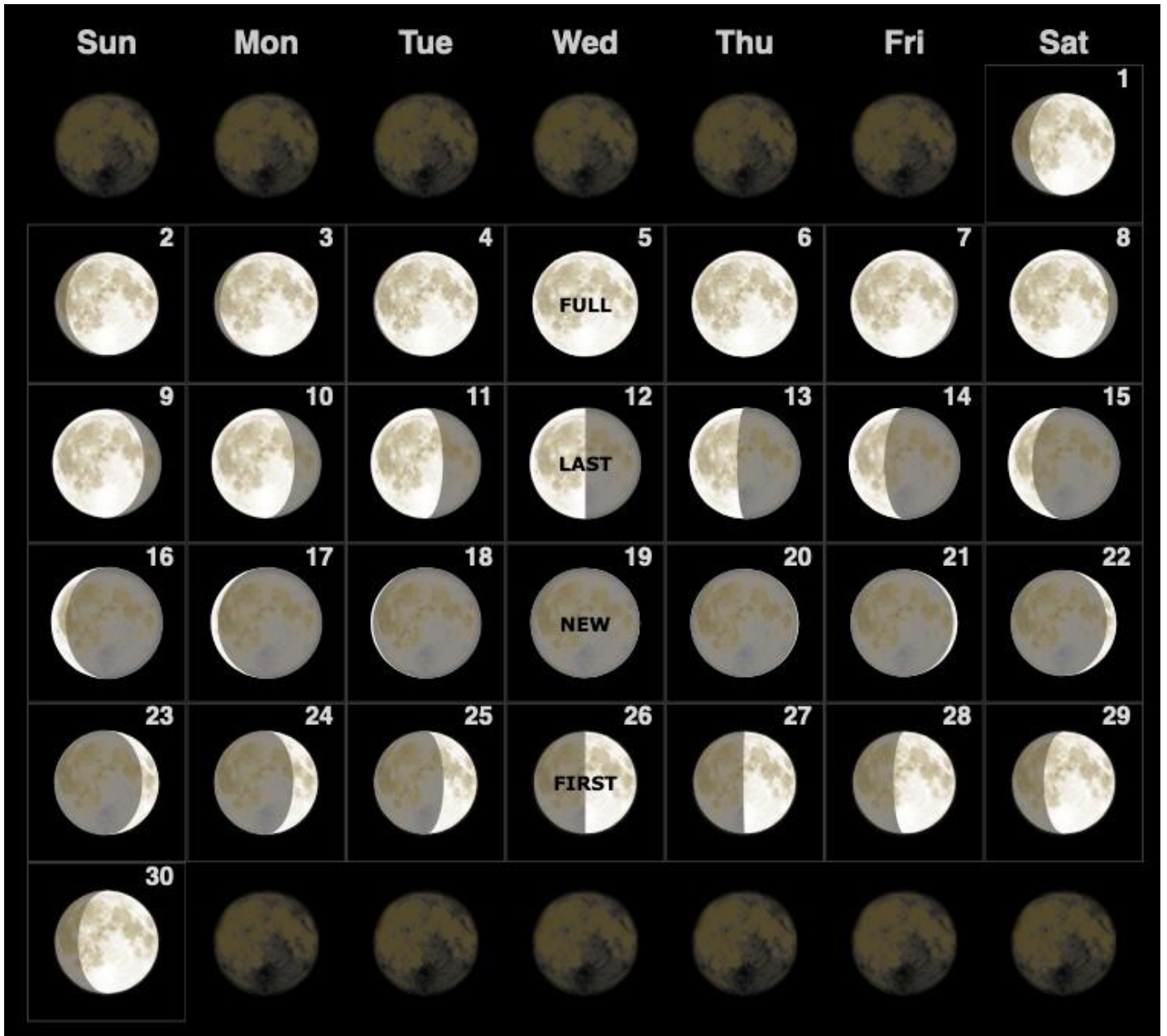


Ceres was at opposition on the 20th of March I took this one on the 14th, six days before. Taken with TS-86/460 SDQ refractor.



Moon Phases

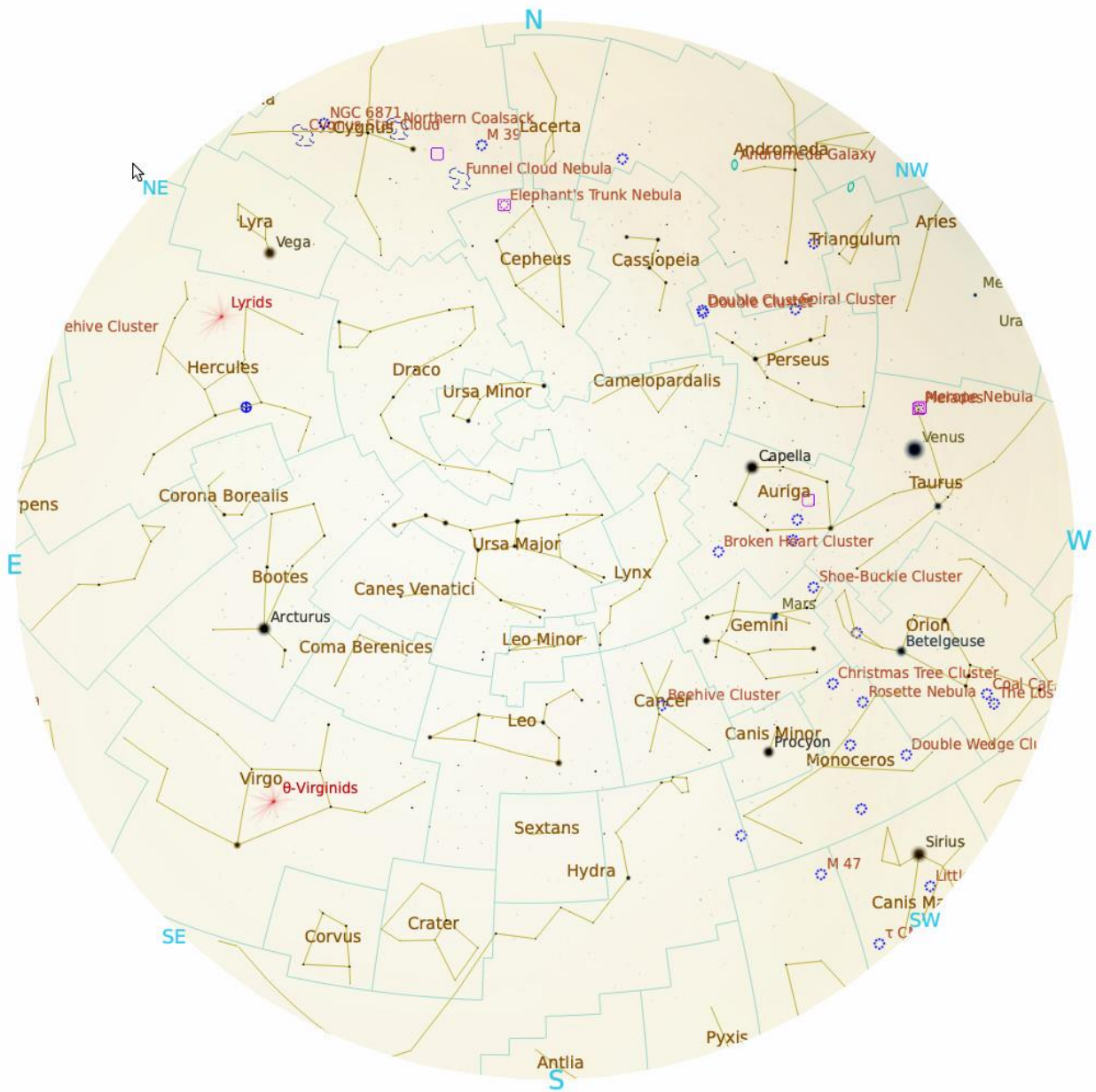
April 2023



Credit: <https://www.moongiant.com/calendar/>



April 2023 Sky Chart



FOV 193° 21.6 FPS 2023-04-15 22:00:00 UTC+01:00

Taken from: Stellarium

