

SPACEWATCH

the newsletter of the Abingdon Astronomical Society

Next Talk
14th May 2018
AGM and
Celestial Navigation
Themos Tsikas

EDITORIAL

Next months talk is the AGM and although these are not universally popular it is your chance to see how the society is run and add any suggestions as to how you would like to see it run. There will also be a talk on Celestial Navigation given by one of our members

As usual we are also short of after tea talks so if you have anything that you would like to talk about or an observing programme you are working on then please see Chairman Clifford. Although it may seem like a worn record without participation in these then meetings may well start to end early. I guess I can stop putting this in when people start to come forward.



M33 reprocessed image by Chairman Clifford

THE NIGHT SKY THIS MONTH

by Bob Dryden

Mercury: Technically, visible in the morning sky, Mercury is almost impossible to see this session. It reaches Greatest Western Elongation on 29th April at an elongation of 27° and is at magnitude -0.2 by mid-May so it sounds like you should be able to see it quite easily. Unfortunately it never gets more than 4° above the horizon and much of the time it is in bright morning twilight.

Venus: Shining at -3.9 magnitude Venus is an easy object to find in the evening sky. By sunset in mid-April you have about 2 hours to see Venus before it sets in the west. By mid-May this has increased to 3 hours and Venus is a decent 23° above the horizon at sunset. The planet is passing through the constellations of Aries and Taurus which means the ecliptic is at a steep angle to the horizon and this results in Venus gaining altitude quite rapidly as the days pass.

Telescopically the view is not great as the phase is still around 90% which is not the best, aesthetically speaking.

On the 17th April the crescent Moon will be approximately 7° east of Venus making for a nice sight in the evening twilight.

Mars: Although we are moving towards the summer opposition of Mars and the planet is brightening nicely, it is staying low in the sky. It is moving through Sagittarius and never gets higher than 15° above the horizon. Mars is a morning object, reaching culmination in the south round about sunrise through out this session.

It starts at +0.2 magnitude and increases in brightness to -0.6 magnitude by mid May. The apparent diameter of the disc reaches 12.5 arc seconds in May which is normally large enough to see surface detail. However, the low altitude may hamper the view somewhat.

On the 6th May the waning gibbous Moon is about 2° north of Mars if you want a signpost to finding it.

Jupiter: In early April Jupiter is rising around 21.30 UT and culminates at a height of 21° near 02.00 UT. Jupiter reaches opposition on 9th May which means by the end of April it is on view virtually all night. Shining at -2.4 magnitude, it is not hard to find Jupiter as it moves amongst the stars of Libra. However, if you do need a guide, then the Full Moon will be approximately 4° from Jupiter on 30th April.

Saturn: As Saturn is found in Sagittarius, it means it is never going to get very high above the horizon. At maximum, it will get to an altitude of 16°, which means telescopic views will be compromised somewhat although the rings are wide open at an angle of 25.5° so you will be able to make them out easy enough in your telescope.

At +0.4 magnitude it is an easy naked eye object despite the low altitude. In mid-April the planet rises about 01.30 UT and by mid-May this has become 23.30 UT. Once up, Saturn is visible for the rest of the night.

As this session begins there is approximately 5° between Saturn and Mars but they are moving apart now. On 5th May the waning gibbous Moon is around 2° east of Saturn.

Uranus & Neptune: Uranus is now too close to the Sun to be seen.

Neptune is not much better placed as it is not visible until May in the morning sky.

However, even then it remains below 15° altitude and as it shines at just +7.8 magnitude the planet will be very difficult to see. If you want to have a go then Neptune is in Aquarius and rises around 2 hours before the Sun in mid-May.

Meteors: While there are no major meteor showers active at the moment, there are a couple of more minor ones to watch for if you are keen enough. The Lyrids can be seen between 18th and 25th April with the maximum occurring on the 22nd. On that date the Moon is seven days old and sets around 01.00 UT. This is good as more Lyrids are seen after midnight so the sky will be dark during the morning hours. Be patient, rates are usually around 10 meteors an hour at very best.

The other active shower is regarded as more of a southern hemisphere shower but a few of its meteors

can be seen from the UK. The Eta Aquarids are visible between 24th April and 20th May so there will be Moon free periods during this one.

However, maximum happens on 5th and 6th May at which time the Moon is twenty days old at a waning gibbous phase so will interfere with observations as it rises about midnight.

Although 40 meteors an hour are predicted, as it is a southern shower, most of them will not be observable from here.

Occultations: On May 8th at 02.55 UT the +4.3 magnitude star, Iota Capricornus, reappears from behind the dark limb of the Last Quarter Moon. The Moon will be 8° above the south eastern horizon at the time of reappearance.

Dwarf Planets & Asteroids: 1 Ceres is crossing Cancer, fading to +8.5 magnitude after starting at +8.1.

4 Vesta is very low, in Sagittarius (near the border with Serpens) but it is getting brighter, reaching +6.1 magnitude by mid-May after beginning this session at +7.0 magnitude

NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting for 2017/18 will take place on **Monday 14th May 2018** at All Saints' Methodist Church Hall, Dorchester Crescent, Abingdon at **8.00 p.m.**, and will be followed by a talk.

Agenda

1. Apologies for absence
2. Minutes of the previous Abingdon AS AGM (held 8/5/2017)
3. Matters arising
4. Presentation of Committee's report
5. Presentation of Treasurer's report and Adoption of accounts
6. Setting of membership fees for 2018/2019
7. Election of officers
i) Chairman ii) Secretary iii) Treasurer iv) Publicity Officer
8. Election of other committee members (between one and six in number)
9. Any other business

Chris Holt, Secretary, Abingdon Astronomical Society

NOMINATIONS FOR ELECTIONS TO COMMITTEE

Nominations are sought for the posts of Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer, Publicity Officer and between 1 and 6 other committee members.

Under the Constitution of the Society, the “candidates for election shall be proposed and seconded by ordinary members of the Society and the nomination, including the candidate’s signature, submitted in writing to the Chairman at least four weeks prior to the Annual General Meeting”(para. 10.3.3). Ordinary members are all those who are not honorary members or affiliated members.

The Constitution goes on to say that, “in the event of there being no candidate for the election of an officer of the Society, or fewer than ten candidates for the election to the Committee, the Chairman may accept nominations given at the meeting” (para. 10.3.4).

Chris Holt, Secretary, Abingdon AS



M18 and M81 showing the IFN (integrated Flux Nebulae, dust lit up by star light in our galaxy) by Chairman Clifford.

FURTHER DISCUSSION

If you are not already on our internet mailing list, then why not log on to YahooGroups. The list is called

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'abingdonas'. Members use the list to alert each other about celestial events and to chat about amateur astronomy. The list is quite active, with several messages most weeks. To read through previous messages click on:

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/abingdonas/> .

To join the abingdonas list, please go to <http://www.yahogroups.com> . You can also unsubscribe from the list here.

To post messages to the list, please send them to abingdonas@yahogroups.com . Please note that you will need to sign up with a YahooID if you do not already have one. You can do this on the above page.

Further information about the mailing list can be found on the abingdonas webpage at :

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/abingdonas/> .

More information on society activities can also be found on the Facebook page - <https://www.facebook.com/AbingdonAstroSoc/> Although confusingly we seem to have two groups on Facebook.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

23rd April 8pm Beginners' Meeting in the Main Hall., talks to include Observing with Binoculars, Imaging Galaxies, and Stellar Winds. (although subject to change)

Observing evening: There will be no further regular Observing Evenings until September as it no longer gets dark at a reasonable time. There may be one off specials. Keep an eye on the Facebook page and News group for information. Contact Trevor Pitt or Steve Creasey for details.

