

# The Sky This Month

July 14th - September 13th 2020



## What's On

### July – August

#### Comet C/2020 F3 (NEOWISE)

Currently visible in the constellation of Lynx. Current magnitude is 1.6. Currently visible West-North-West at an altitude of 51 degrees. Should be visible to the naked eye under dark sky conditions – but may require a small pair of binoculars if viewing in a light polluted area.

In the second half of July 2020 it will appear to pass through the constellation of Ursa Major, below the asterism of The Plough (Big Dipper). The comet is notable for being one of the brightest comets visible to observers in the northern hemisphere since Comet Hale–Bopp in 1997. Comet NEOWISE is expected to remain visible to the naked eye throughout most of July 2020.

### 14 July

#### Jupiter at opposition

Fantastic opportunity to view Jupiter as Earth is 300 million kilometres closer to Jupiter than it is at conjunction. The planet will appear 68% larger and 1.3 magnitudes brighter. There will be ample observing time because when the sun sets on 14 July at 21:28, Jupiter will rise and remain visible all night. If it's cloudy, don't worry – you have several weeks – if not months of potential observing time following this alignment.

### 20 July

#### Saturn at opposition

As with Jupiter on the 14th (above) Saturn will be closer to Earth and appear 39% larger and 1.7 magnitudes brighter. The sun will set at 21:21 on the evening of 20 July and Saturn will rise and be visible all night. Again you will have several weeks – if not months of potential observing time.

### 22 July

#### Comet NEOWISE at perigee

The comet reaches its closest point to earth in its orbit. Up until early July, the comet required early morning viewings near the northeast horizon before sunrise. As the comet gets closer to Earth it will be more viable to see it in the hours after sunset. Look to the north-northwest and watch it progress higher and westward night after night. Be sure to catch this fantastic comet in the coming nights because it won't be back for another 6,800 years!

## **Best morning to see Mercury**

The planet Mercury reaches its greatest western elongation of 20 degrees on 22 July. Mornings within about a week of this time will be your opportunities to view the magnitude +0.2 planet in the predawn sky. At 03:47, Mercury will emerge in the east and reach 11 degrees above the horizon by sunrise quickly fading into the brightening sky.

## **29-30 July**

### **Delta Aquariids & Alpha Capricornids**

The Delta Aquariids & Alpha Capricornids meteor showers reach their peak activity on the night of 29–30 July. The showers radiants will be 20 & 27 degrees above the southern horizon. Unfortunately, light from a waxing gibbous moon will interfere with seeing meteors most of the night, but you may have a chance to see some meteors when the Moon sets later in the evening.

## **2 August**

### **Moon & Jupiter**

Keep watch after sunset on 2 August for a close encounter between Jupiter and the waxing gibbous moon. At 01:15 the pair will be visible 10 degrees above the southern horizon, passing within only 2.15 degrees of each other in the constellation of Sagittarius.

## **9 August**

### **Moon & Mars**

Wake up early before sunrise on 9 August to see a close encounter between Mars and the waxing gibbous moon. At 04:57, the pair will be visible 39 degrees above the southern horizon, passing within only 2.57 degrees of each other in the constellation Cetus.

## **12 August**

### **Perseids**

The Perseids meteor shower reaches its peak activity on the night of 12–13 August. A good number of meteors should be visible a few nights before and after the peak. The radiant will appear to be 60 degrees above the northeastern horizon.

## **13 August**

### **Best morning to see Venus**

At 02:05, Venus will emerge from the eastern horizon and reach 31 degrees above the horizon by sunrise, fading into the brightening sky.

## **28 August**

### **Asteroid Ceres at opposition**

The dwarf planet Ceres will reach opposition at 22:18 on 28 August. At this time, Ceres will be ideally placed for observation, reaching magnitude +7.7 (easily visible with binoculars).

## **6 September**

### **Moon & Mars**

Wake up early before sunrise on 6 September to see a close encounter between Mars and the waning gibbous moon. At 05:51, the pair will be visible 37 degrees above the southwestern horizon, passing within only 0.41 degrees of each other in the constellation Pisces.

