

# The Sky This Month

12 February – 11 March 2024



## What's On

Wednesday, 16 February 2024 @ 21:10

### 1. The Pleiades & the Moon

Watch the Pleiades through binoculars on the evening of the 16 February as they get a close visit from the 50% illuminated moon.



Wednesday, 21 February 2024 @ 00:53

### 2. Moon & Pollux

Keep watch during the evening of 20 February to see a close encounter between Pollux and the waxing gibbous moon. At 00:53 on the 21st, the pair will be visible  $46^\circ$  above the western horizon, passing within only  $1.90^\circ$  each other in the constellation Gemini.

21–28 February 2024

### 3. Conjunction of Mars & Venus

With a clear view to the south-eastern horizon there's a conjunction of Mars and Venus in the predawn skies during the second half of this month. Early risers will see the two planets appearing to move closer to each other in the sky appearing closest on the mornings of the 21 to 22nd of February.

The two planets are actually around 75 million miles apart, but will appear close together for the rest of the month.



Sunday, 03 March 2024 @ 05:35

## 4. Moon & Antares

Wake up early before sunrise on the 03 March to see a close encounter between Antares and the last quarter moon. At 05:35, the pair will be visible  $10^\circ$  above the southern horizon, passing within only  $1.44^\circ$  of each other in the constellation Scorpius.

## Constellation of the month:

### 5. Cepheus [SEE-fee-us] ‘The King’

Cepheus is an inconspicuous constellation. The constellation's five bright stars are easy to find only because they face the open side of the W shape of Cassiopeia. It looks a little like a house with a pointed roof. The brightest star Alderamin (from the Arabic for ‘right arm’), has a magnitude of 2.5.

### 6. Delta-Cephei ( $\delta$ )

One of the most famous of the variable stars its variation was discovered by amateur astronomer John Goodricke in 1784. Its highest magnitude is 3.5 and it fades to 4.4 completing a cycle every 5.4 days. Delta-Cephei ( $\delta$ ) is the prototype of the Cepheid [SEE-fee-us] variable stars. Approximately 891 light-years away, it is among the closest stars of this type to the Sun. Delta-Cephei ( $\delta$ ) conveniently sits between two bright stars that shine at either end of its range of variability: Zeta-Cephei ( $\zeta$ ) at magnitude 3.6, and Epsilon-Cephei ( $\epsilon$ ) at a magnitude of 4.2.

## **7. Iris Nebula (NGC 7023)**

Near to Cepheus can be seen the Iris Nebula. This is a reflection nebula illuminated by a young stellar cluster. It's a beautiful object when observed through telescopes.

## **8. Elephant Trunk nebula (IC 1396)**

This is an open star cluster in Cepheus south of the blood-red Garnet Star with a magnitude of 3.5. It is loose, irregular and awash with a faint nebulous background mixed with dark lanes.

## **9. Cave nebula (Sh 2-155)**

This is a dim and very diffuse bright nebula within a larger nebula complex containing emission, reflection, and dark nebulosity.