

SKYNOTES for May 2018

An easily printable version to encourage active observing among members of the Nottingham AS

Stand-out features highlighted

All times given below are in British Summer Time (BST)

PHASES OF THE MOON

<i>Phase</i>	<i>Date and time</i>
Last Quarter	3:10 am on May 8 th
New Moon	12:49 pm on the 15 th
First Quarter	4:50 am on the 22 nd
Full Moon	2:21 pm on the 29 th

This month the Moon is closest to the Earth on the 17th, and furthest on the 6th.

THE PLANETS

Mercury is a morning object throughout May, but badly placed for observation from the UK.

Venus is **a brilliant object in the west-northwest after sunset**, though never particularly high as the sky darkens. By the end of May it will be shining at magnitude -4.0 at an elongation of 34 degrees.

Mars continues to be a morning object throughout the month, becoming brighter than magnitude -1.0 , and growing in angular diameter to 15 arcseconds.. Unfortunately throughout the period it will remain around 22 degrees south of the equator, far from ideal for UK observers. But don't give up on Mars if your telescope fails to reveal much clear surface detail. Naked-eye observation is also rewarding, because as Mars nears opposition, **its brightness increases rapidly, more than doubling in the space of a few weeks**. In fact **by the end of July it will be about six times as bright as it will be in mid-May**...worth watching out for!

May is the best month of 2018 for observing Jupiter, as the giant planet reaches opposition to the Sun on the 9th. By then it will be shining at magnitude -2.5 and will have an equatorial diameter of almost 45 arcseconds. Lying in the constellation of Libra, it will be rising before 9 pm and will remain above the horizon until dawn. Although Jupiter will never be more than 23 degrees above the southern horizon this year, **make the best of it, because it won't be any better-placed until 2021!**

Saturn, in the constellation of Sagittarius, will be rising soon after midnight in early May. Being more than 22 degrees south of the celestial equator throughout the month, it is far from ideally-placed for northern hemisphere observers. It will be slowly brightening, reaching magnitude 0.2 in mid-month, with the ring system appearing more than 40 arcseconds across its major axis.

Uranus must now be regarded as unobservable as it is very close to the Sun.

Neptune, in the constellation of Aquarius, is now a morning object. By the close of May, it will be rising at about 2 am.

METEORS

May isn't a great month for meteor showers. Some weak activity (up to 5 events per hour under ideal conditions) may be observed from southern radiants: the **Scorpiids** peaking on May 12th, and a few **Ophiuchids** putting in an appearance late in the month.