

Tonight's Sky: 2017

March

Your guide to constellations, deep-sky objects, planets, and events. Tonight's Sky, highlights of the March Sky.

Evening Planets

For the first half of March, Mars and Venus appear in the western sky after sunset.

Catch them early, because late in the month, Venus slips below the horizon before twilight ends.

During the final week of March, though, Mercury takes the place of Venus low above the western horizon.

Try to glimpse the small planet before it disappears from view.

In the late evening, watch for Jupiter rising in the east.

A telescope will reveal the gas planet's dark cloud bands. A large telescope might reveal the Great Red Spot.

Constellations and Deep-Sky Objects

As the brilliant stars of winter progress toward the west, the constellations of spring make their appearance.

Two March constellations derived from Greek mythology, Gemini and Cancer, lie in the zodiac. The zodiac is the name for the band of sky through which the Sun, Moon, and planets appear to travel.

The Gemini twins lie high overhead. They were among Jason's Argonauts, who sailed the seas searching for the Golden Fleece.

The two bright stars are the heads of the brothers, Castor and Pollux.

A fuzzy patch lies near the "feet" of the Gemini twins. Called M35, it is a pretty cluster of several hundred stars.

Cancer is often identified as a crab but has also been seen as a lobster or crayfish. In Greek mythology, Cancer was placed in the heavens by Hera, wife of Zeus, to immortalize its tenacious but futile battle with Hercules.

It is a much dimmer constellation than Gemini, and hard to see in light-polluted skies.

Within Cancer lies the lovely Beehive Cluster. Ancient stargazers called it "the cloudy star." This large cluster contains hundreds of stars and lies about 577 light-years away from us.

Morning Planets

Saturn appears in the southeast in the pre-dawn hours.

Use a telescope to spy its famous rings.

Ending

The night sky is always a celestial showcase. Explore its wonders from your own backyard.