

Forthcoming CAWAS Meetings on Zoom at 7:00pm GMT		
Friday February 12th	Richard Miles	Fire and Ice: introducing the two most volcanically active objects in our Solar System
Friday March 12th	Peter Williamson	Herschel to Hawkwind
Friday April 9th	Dr David Rosario	Big Bang - atoms - stars - planets - supernovae

**Observing Sessions** with RADAS at Barby Cricket Club at 19:00 (subject to Covid restrictions). In general two dates are given, the one to be used will be notified the day before.  
**February** 19/20      **March** 12/13, 19/20

<u>February</u>		<u>Event</u>	
Friday	12th	Venus near Jupiter	
Thursday	18th	Moon near Mars	
Friday	19th	Moon - first quarter	☾
Sunday	21st	Amphitrite opposition Moon's Golden Handle visible	
Saturday	27th	Moon - full	☉
<b>March</b>			
Wednesday	3rd	Mars near Pleiades	
Thursday	4th	Vesta opposition	
Friday	5th	Mercury near Jupiter	
Saturday	6th	Moon - last quarter, Mercury greatest elongation west	☾
Thursday	11th	Neptune conjunction	

**Coventry and Warwickshire Astronomical Society**  
 The society usually meets on the second Friday in the month, at Earlsdon Methodist Church Hall. The meetings begin at 19:15 and end at 21:30. **(Suspended until further notice)**

**Web Site:** <http://www.covastro.org.uk>  
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**Chairman**  
 John 07762 061518 [johndavis744@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:johndavis744@tiscali.co.uk)      **Mira editor**  
 Ivor 024 76319519 [ivorlclarke@btinternet.com](mailto:ivorlclarke@btinternet.com)

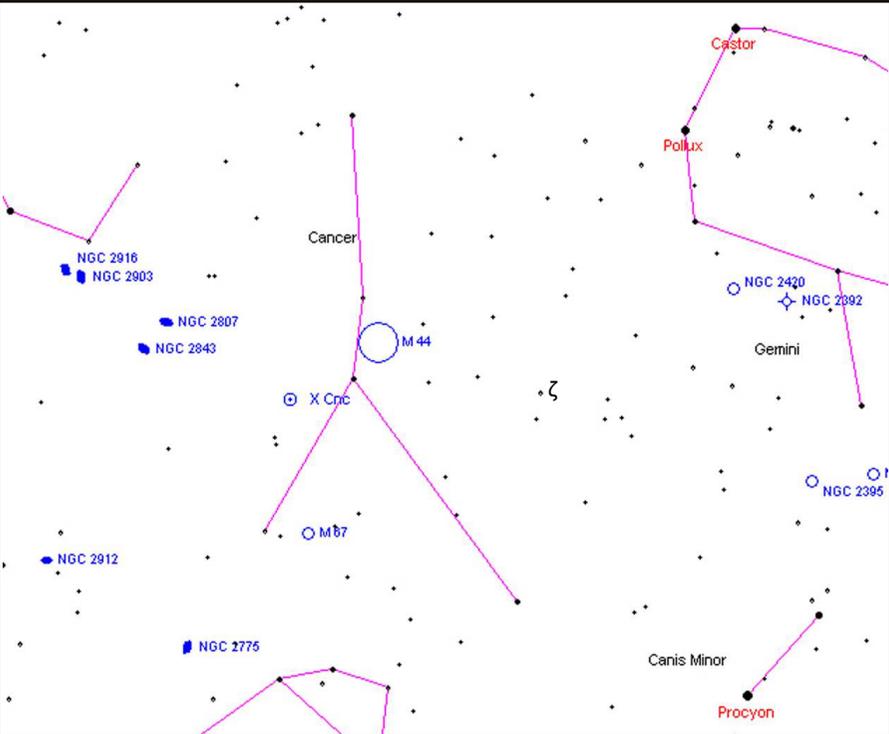
**Secretary**  
 Geoffrey 01926 335399 [gjohnstone@btinternet.com](mailto:gjohnstone@btinternet.com)

**Vice Chairman**  
 Alan 024 76270169 [alandocwho@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:alandocwho@yahoo.co.uk)      **Skynotes**  
 Mark 024 76543689 [mark@covastro.plus.com](mailto:mark@covastro.plus.com)

**Treasurer**  
 Vaughan 01926 402414

# Coventry and Warwickshire Astronomical Society

## Sky Notes February 12th to March 12th 2021 No. 281



The Crab

Cancer might be a faint constellation sandwiched between Gemini and Leo, but it still contains some interesting objects. The most famous being the V-shaped Beehive Cluster, M44, 610 ly away with its more distant cousin (2600 ly) M67 to the south. X Cancri is a remarkably red carbon-rich semi-regular variable star, whose brightness varies between mag. +5.5 and +7.5 every 193 days. ζ (zeta) appears to be a single star, but is in fact a group of five gravitationally bound stars, three of which (mag. +5.58, +5.99 and +6.12) can be seen with a small telescope, separated by 5" and 1".

**Time** given in these skynotes is Co-ordinated Universal Time (UTC) known as GMT here in the UK. On Feb 11 the Equation of Time reached its maximum of 14 minutes giving Coventry 20 minutes of summer time.

**Sun** moves north from Capricornus into Aquarius this month and is gradually becoming more interesting, with more sunspots visible as cycle 25 develops.

February 12th	Rise 07:28	Set 17:14	Dec $-13^{\circ} 28'$
March 12th	Rise 06:27	Set 18:05	Dec $-3^{\circ} 14'$

**Planets** this month are poorly placed with only Mars and Uranus not near the Sun or the horizon in twilight, as are the others.

**Mercury** (+3.0 10.3" 5% to +0.1 6.5" 65%) moves from Aquarius into Capricornus and after its inferior conjunction last month moves into the morning sky. However it will be difficult to observe as it is only  $5^{\circ}$  above the SE horizon at sunrise, even when it reaches its greatest elongation west of  $27.3^{\circ}$  on Mar 6. Locating it on the day before, Mar 5 might be easier as it passes just 19' to the north of Jupiter.

**Venus** ( $-3.9 9.9''$  98% to  $-3.9 9.7''$  100%) moves from Capricornus into Aquarius and is too close to the Sun to be observed as it heads towards conjunction next month. Which is a pity as it lies less than a degree east of Jupiter on Feb 12.

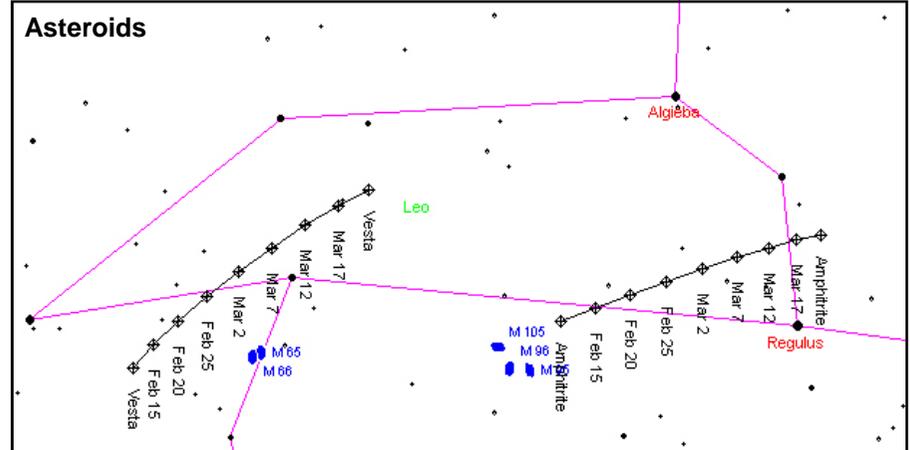
**Mars** (+0.7 7.2" to +1.1 5.9") moves from Aries into Taurus reducing in brightness all the time and is visible high in the SW for the first half of the night, setting around 01:00. At the end of the month Mars lies between the Hyades and Pleiades clusters, passing to within  $3^{\circ}$  of the Pleiades on March 3 and 4. On Feb 18 the Moon lies  $5^{\circ}$  to the south.

**Jupiter** ( $-2.0 32.6''$  to  $-2.0 33.5''$ ) lies in Capricornus and after its conjunction last month gradually draws away from the Sun throughout the month such that towards the end it might be glimpsed very low down in the SE just before dawn.

**Saturn** (+0.7 15.2" to +0.7 15.5") lies in Capricornus and after Jupiter overtook it last month it rises before Jupiter very low down in the SE just before dawn. At the end of the month it lies  $9^{\circ}$  to the west of Jupiter and as a consequence a little higher above the horizon, such that it might become visible.

**Uranus** (+5.8 3.5" to +5.4 3.4") lies in Aries and is visible high in the SW for the first half of the night, setting at midnight at the beginning of the month and 22:30 at the end.

**Neptune** (+8.0 2.2") lies in Aquarius and as it passes through conjunction on March 11 it is too close to the Sun to be observed this month.



**4 Vesta**, the second largest asteroid (mean diameter 525.4km) comes to opposition in Leo on Mar 4 when it nearly reaches naked eye visibility at a magnitude of +6.2.

**29 Amphitrite** is at opposition on Feb 21, also in Leo but is much fainter at mag. +9.2. The tracks of both are shown in the chart above.

**Moon** is best viewed near the terminator as there the shadows are longest and make the craters and mountain ranges stand out.

In the picture the most obvious mountain range is the Apennine Mountains with Mare Serenitatis to the west. To its south is the prominent crater Albatagnius, named after an Arabian astronomer and 130km in diameter.

Joining it to the north is the 160km diam. Hipparchus (a Greek astronomer) and to the south are two prominent smaller craters, 70km diam. Werner (a German mathematician) and 80km diam. Aliacensis (a French theologian).

On Feb 21 the famous Golden Handle can be seen on the terminator, where the Jura Mountains are lit before Sinus Iridum.

