

WEEKLY SKY REPORT

February 23 – March 1, 2025

CONSTELLATIONS

Taurus the bull is easy to find due to the brilliant planet Jupiter set into the middle of its right horn. The bright star closest to Jupiter is Aldebaran. This star is a red giant that is cooler than our sun but has a radius about 45 times greater. It is believed that Aldebaran has a planet circling it that is several times the mass of Jupiter. As it gets dark Cassiopeia and Orion are high overhead. The Gemini twins Castor and Pollux are also prominent in the east with Leo the lion is rising from the Berkeley Hills with night fall.

PLANETS

The brilliant Jupiter is just about directly overhead at 7 p.m. Mars is a smoldering red as it gets dark and is resting right between the Gemini twins. The incandescent Venus is in the south west above San Francisco but in a month it will start heading to towards its other home as the Morning Star.

READING RECOMMENDATION

110 Things to See with a Telescope by John A. Read with Chris Vaughan.

Trainspotters have their own movies. Some bird spotters try to document 200 different birds in their lifetime. Astronomers have a similar challenge, as presented in this illuminating book. It all started with an astronomer named Charles Messier who had a passion for finding comets. As a youth he observed what is known as the Great Comet of 1744. This comet was seen at times to have six tails and was bright enough to see during the day. This inspired Messier to become an astronomer and was given the nickname "Ferret of Comets" by King Louis XV of France. During Messier's hunting career he found 13 comets but he kept finding blurry objects, which he came to realize were not comets. To help others avoid this disappointment, he created a list that we now know to include dozens of galaxies, nebulae, and star clusters. This book helps the reader track these Messier objects and become a true star spotter.

Telescopes @ Berkeley Public Library!

We have 5 Orion StarBlast Astro Reflector Telescopes that you can borrow! Each BPL Branch has a telescope, which may be borrowed for 1 week. Place a hold on it and then pick it up from your branch when it is ready. It is fairly easy to carry at 13 lbs., and stands about 2 feet tall.

Here's what you get:

"A great compact grab-and-go telescope designed for entry-level and intermediate astronomy enthusiasts. Substantial 4.5" aperture and fast f/4 focal ratio provides bright, detailed views of solar system targets like the Moon and planets, as well as wide-field celestial objects like nebulas and star clusters."



Much of the information for this report comes from the wonderful web site, Heavens Above. You can enter your home city location and bookmark it for easy access: <http://www.heavens-above.com>. Other stellar sources include: <http://www.space.com> and <http://www.nasa.gov>. And check [spacex.com](http://www.spacex.com) for launches.

Binoculars @ Berkeley Public Library!

Thanks to a generous donation from the Cal Falcons program, we have 9 Vortex-Raptor binocular kits that you can put on hold and pick up at the location of your choice.

Here's what you get:

Porro prism performance in a mid-size, wide-angle design, the Raptors deliver a bright, crisp image with excellent color fidelity - even in low light conditions. With a wide range of interpupillary distance, they can easily be adjusted to fit anyone in the family, making them ideal for serious, hard-core youth hunters. The kit comes with a copy of The Sibley Field Guide to Birds of Western America and a pocket guide to local birds of the SF Bay Area. But it is also great for looking at planets, the moon and the stars!

