

WEEKLY SKY REPORT

February 18 – February 24, 2024

PLANETS

Venus is shedding its Morning Star garb and has just about disappeared into the glare of sunrise; it will return in late fall as the Evening Star. Saturn is on its way to the far side of the sun from us and won't be back in our evening sky until August. Jupiter is just past halfway across the southern sky.

CONSTELLATIONS

This is a great time of year to see some of the most striking constellations. That big man of the night, Orion, with his 3-starred belt and the glowing red chip on his shoulder, Betelgeuse, is in the southern sky. His good dog Canis with his shiny nose Sirius, is chasing Lepus the jackrabbit right past Orion's feet. Orion is too busy to notice as he's dealing with Taurus the bull with his long horns ready to charge him. The Gemini twins are arm in arm above Orion watching the action. Meanwhile, Leo the lion is bounding from the Berkeley Hills and the twins better watch out!

READING RECOMMENDATION

Inside the Star Factory: The Creation of the James Webb Space Telescope. Photographs by Chris Gunn, Text by Christopher Wanjek.

The Webb Space Telescope has been sending images to Earth from some half million miles away for just over a year and a half. Already it has given us images and data that are rewriting our understanding of the universe. There certainly will be many large books of lovely photographs coming our way. For now, we have this gorgeous folio book of baby pictures of the telescope growing into its \$10+ billion full-grown self. There are portraits of the scientists and engineers who spent almost 20 years from the original funding and planning—some dozen years beyond its first proposed completion date. You can keep track of new Webb images: <https://jwst.nasa.gov/>

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 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!

