

WEEKLY SKY REPORT

March 24 – March 30, 2024

COMETS

Here's a good reason to check out a telescope or binoculars from our library [see second page]: Comet 12P Pons-Brooks is making its way across the sky! This comet was discovered independently by the two greatest comet hunters. Jean-Louis Pons and William R. Brooks discovered 64 comets between them. Comet Pons-Brooks orbits the sun about once every 71 years—so now's a good time to catch it!

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!

SPACE STATIONS

There are a couple of good passes of the International Space Station (ISS) visible from Berkeley this week. You don't need a telescope or binoculars to see it. The ISS has been in orbit 25 years and more than 270 humans have visited it. There have been many creatures great and small from Earth that have spent time on the ISS. These are some of the non-human passengers: more than 450 fruit flies; at least 5 Japanese rice fish; one or more Hawaiian Bobtail squid; about 36 of a kind of quail; more than 40 mice; golden orb spiders. Even some mosquitos—all in the name of science!

Mar. 28 9:15pm North West, Altitude 20°; 9:16pm North, Altitude 48°; Magnitude -3.1

Mar. 30 9:16pm North West, Altitude 20°, 9:18pm South West, Alt. 44°; Magnitude -3.0

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!

