

# WEEKLY SKY REPORT

February 2 – February 8, 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 is overhead and Orion is bounding out of the Berkeley Hills followed shortly afterwards by the Gemini twins Castor and Pollux. By 10 p.m. it is Leo the lion's turn to rise from the Berkeley Hills

## PLANETS

The brilliant Jupiter is hanging over the Berkeley Hills as it gets dark. Mars is a smoldering red as it rises around 6:00 p.m. and is just an arm's length or so from the Gemini twins. Saturn is on the other horizon and has just passed the incandescent Venus in the south west above San Francisco.

## SOLAR SAIL

The experimental space craft called ACS3 Solar Sail is visible from Berkeley this week. This craft was launched from New Zealand April 23, 2024. It is square-shaped and 33 feet on each side, or about the size of half a tennis court. The sail when launched was in a container about the size of a microwave oven. It is designed to be propelled by the solar wind with photons from the sun bouncing off the sail. This would eliminate the need for chemically fueled rockets and allow the craft to travel indefinitely. Here's the chance to see an experimental spacecraft in action!

Feb. 2 6:39pm South, Altitude 20°; 6:44pm South West, Altitude 82°; Magnitude 2.0

Feb. 3 7:05pm South, Altitude 20°; 7:11pm West, Altitude 50°; Magnitude 2.8

Feb. 5 6:14pm South East, Altitude 20°; 6:20pm North East, Altitude 68°; Magnitude 1.9

Feb. 6 6:40pm South, Altitude 20°; 6:46pm West, Altitude 76°; Magnitude 2.1

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# 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 nebulae 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://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!



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