# **Northants Amateur Astronomers (NAA)**



In Focus No.305

www.naastronomy.co.uk

# December 2023 – February 2024





James Webb Space Telescope image of the Crab Nebula (released 30 October 2023) - Credit: NASA, ESA, CSA, STScl, T. Temim

## What to look out for in the night sky

Jupiter will be a bright evening planet throughout December.

Some December constellations you can find: Aries, Fornax, Perseus

**4 December - Mercury at Greatest Elongation East** The planet appears at its furthest distance from the Sun and so should be clearly visible in the evening sky.

**14/15 December (peak) - Geminids Meteor Shower** Many consider this to be the best meteor shower as it can produce up to 120 multicoloured meteors per hour, at its peak. The shower runs from 7 -17

December 7-17. The nearly new moon should produce dark skies for an excellent show. Best viewing will be after midnight and meteors can appear anywhere in the sky.

**15 December - Orion Nebula** This will reach its highest point in the sky at around midnight. On the following evenings it will culminate (be at its highest) four minutes earlier each day.

17 December - Close Approach of the Moon and Saturn The pair will be visible from 11:34 until 21:33.

22 December - December (Winter) Solstice

**22/23 December - Ursids Meteor Shower (peak)** This shower produces about 5-10 meteors per hour, running from 17-25 December. The waxing gibbous moon will block out most of the faintest meteors this year but you should be able to catch a few good ones. Best viewing will be just after midnight.

**27 December - Full Moon** This full moon is known as the Cold Moon, Long Nights Moon or Moon Before Yule.

Some January constellations you can find: Orion, Taurus, Lepus

**3/4 January - Quadrantids Meteor Shower (peak)** The Quadrantids Shower produces up to 40 meteors per hour. The shower runs from 1-5 January, meteors appearing anywhere in the sky.

**12 January - Mercury at Greatest Western Elongation** This is the best time to see Mercury as it is at its highest point above the eastern horizon, in the morning sky, just before sunrise.

25 January - Full Moon This full moon is known as the Wolf Moon, Old Moon or Moon After Yule.

Some February constellations you can find: Canis Major, Gemini, Monoceros

**15 February - Close Approach of the Moon and Jupiter** The pair will be visible from 09:32 until 00:00.

24 February - Full Moon This full moon is known as the Snow Moon or Hunger Moon.

## Meetings

Meetings are held in **The Lounge, Geddington Village Hall, Queen Street, Geddington NN14 1AZ** Please visit **www.naastronomy.co.uk** to check final meeting information.

Tuesday 5 December: Christmas meal at the Trading Post, 7.30pm – Booking essential

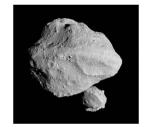
Tuesday 16 January: 7.30pm for 7.45pm Members' presentations RAFFLE

Tuesday 23 January: Committee meeting at The Piper 7.30pm Tuesday 6 February: 7.30pm for 7.45pm Members' presentations

Tuesday 20 February: 7.30pm for 7.45pm Fish and Chips Supper – **booking essential** RAFFLE

Meetings with guest speakers: £4 (£5 for non-members) General meetings: £3 (£4 for non-members)

Full membership: £30



Asteroid Dinkinesh, with its satellite, as seen by the Lucy Long-Range Reconnaissance Imager (L'LORRI), on NASA's Lucy spacecraft during its flyby of the asteroid binary. Image taken 1 November 2023.

Credit: NASA/Goddard/SwRI/Johns Hopkins APL/NOIRLab

### Club contact details

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Joint Secretaries: Jane Napier Tel: 07960 262401, Anne Douglas email: adouglas2@sky.com

Committee Member: Frank Tasker Tel: 01536 390040

#### **Useful websites**

https://www.space.com

https://www.star-gazing.co.uk/WebPage/home-2/dave-eagle/

https://www.nasa.gov/

https://esa.int

https://www.skyatnightmagazine.com/advice/skills/astronomy-guide-viewing-planets-night-sky/

https://www.timeanddate.com/astronomy/sights-to-see.html

https://in-the-sky.org/

Spot the International Space Station:

https://spotthestation.nasa.gov/sightings/view.cfm?country=United\_Kingdom&region=England&city=Ketteri

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