

New Moon 3 rd @ 00:23	First Quarter 9 th @ 15:12	Full Moon 17 th @ 09:29	Last Quarter 25 th @ 13:49
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Note: Times are in Chailey local time – GMT+0

David H. Levy once said “Comets are like cats, they have tails, and do precisely what they want.” As some of you have heard, this year astronomers were expecting two bright comets – Comet PANSTARRS and Comet ISON. True to David H. Levy’s quote, these two are doing exactly what they want! Comet PANSTARRS was visible earlier in the year, and was easily visible through a pair of binoculars, but failed to become as bright as was hoped.

Comet ISON seems to be pulling a similar trick at the moment. Visible early in the morning skies by binoculars, ISON is currently in the constellation of Virgo. It is brightening, and recently underwent a surge in brightness. It is failing to reach the dreamed of heights of becoming a “Great Comet” at the time of writing though! Of course, by the time this reaches you, it might be in the midst of a huge outburst – who knows with comets!

The one that you should watch out for is comet 2013/R1 Lovejoy, which will be in the constellation Boötes at the beginning of the December. Look for a faint fuzzy object near the bright star Arcturus. To find Arcturus, follow the curve of the handle of the Plough asterism (in Ursa Major) to the next bright star – that is Arcturus, and is often mistaken for the planet Mars due to its red colour. The later in the evening/morning you leave it, the higher Arcturus (and the comet) will be.

If you prefer early evening Astronomy there is plenty to be had this month. Jupiter is still putting on a great showing in Gemini at the moment, and will continue to get higher and earlier as the month goes on. To find Jupiter, look directly to the East at about 30 degrees above the horizon for a very bright star. That is Jupiter. Have a look through binoculars, and you can clearly see the moons of Jupiter around the planet.

Another marvellous thing to look out for in the sky this month is the Geminid Meteor Shower. Peaking on the 13th/14th of December, this meteor shower typically produces bright meteors. Unfortunately, the Moon will be in the way, making all but the brightest meteors difficult to see. Wait until after the Moon has set on the 13th December to make the most of it! The Moon sets at 04:48, so this really is for those early risers out there.

I am now available to give talks on Astronomy to local groups and schools. Please contact me on 01273 400989 or use the email address below. I am a registered STEM Ambassador, and have been CRB checked accordingly.

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