

New Moon 30 <sup>th</sup> March @19:45	First Quarter 7 <sup>th</sup> April @ 09:31	Full Moon 15 <sup>th</sup> April @ 18:09	Last Quarter 22 <sup>nd</sup> April @ 08:52
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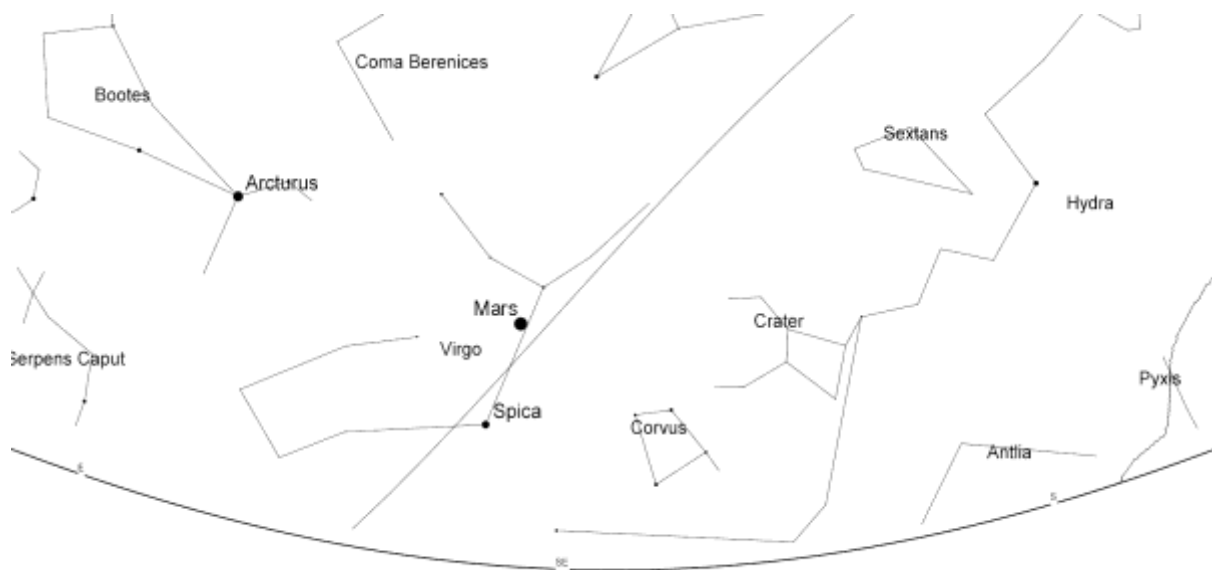
*Note: Times are in Chailey local time – BST/GMT+1*

I hope you managed to get your star counts into the Campaign for Rural England last month.

In this month, have a look out for the planet Mars in the night sky. On the 8<sup>th</sup> April, Mars will be at opposition. Opposition means that the Earth is directly between our Sun and a planet. In this case, Mars. It is exactly opposite to the Sun. Shortly afterwards on 14<sup>th</sup> April, it will be closest to Earth at 57,406,300 miles distant.

Mars is very easy to spot. It appears as a bright red ‘star’ in the sky close to the bright star Spica in the constellation Virgo, and you can tell that it is not a normal star by watching for the twinkling. Stars twinkle because they are very very far away, and the light reaching Earth appears to be coming from a single point. Because Mars is much closer, and the light is coming from a large surface area, the amount of twinkling is much less. This holds true for most of the planets – they will always twinkle much less than the stars.

To find Mars, look to the East and find the bright red Star Arcturus in Bootes, about 30 degrees above the horizon, then look down and to the South-East to find Spica and Mars together. Mars is quite low at 9pm at 23 degrees above the horizon on the 20<sup>th</sup> April. Use the finder chart below to see if you can spot the red planet.



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.

Richie Jarvis

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