



**SUN** Moving through *Pisces* into *Aries*.

**MOON** New Moon on the 25<sup>th</sup>, Full Moon on the 9<sup>th</sup>.

**PLANETS** **Mercury** is an evening object after the 12<sup>th</sup> shining at  $-0.7^M$ . It is in conjunction with a crescent Moon and the Pleiades on the 26<sup>th</sup>.  
**Venus** is the morning "star" or Lucifer after the 10<sup>th</sup> shining at  $-4.4^M$  for an hour before sunrise in the East. On the 22<sup>nd</sup> there is a nice conjunction with Mars and a crescent Moon.  
**Mars** is a morning object moving from *Aquarius* into *Pisces*.  
**Jupiter** rises after 03:30 so is a morning object as it moves through *Capricornus*. Large binoculars will reveal the dark equatorial belts while any small instrument will show the four Galilean moons lined up across its equator.  
**Saturn** is a  $0.7^M$  object in *Leo* all evening and sets before midnight by the end of the month.

**COMETS** No periodic comets expected this month.

**METEORS** The Lyrids are swift brilliant meteors originating from the tail of comet Thatcher 1861 I. They will be visible from the 20<sup>th</sup> to the 23<sup>rd</sup> peaking on the morning of the 21<sup>st</sup>. The usual rate of 10 per hour is expected.

**STARS**  $\iota$  *cancri* is a worthwhile double star to observe with binoculars and small telescopes. Its components are contrasting blue/green and yellow.  
Regulus ( $\alpha$  *leonis*), the "heart of the lion" is a wide double star, but is more interesting because it lies on the ecliptic - the plane containing the Sun's orbit. This means that from time to time it is occulted by the Moon or planets. Such occultations have told astronomers much about planetary rings and atmospheres.  
Algieba ( $\gamma$  *leonis*) is a telescopic double comprising two orange stars of  $2^M$  and  $3^M$  respectively. They can be observed in daytime due to their colour contrast with the sky.  
 $R$  *leonis* is a mira type variable star that oscillates between  $4.4^M$  and  $11.3^M$  over 310 days.  
In *Crater*,  $\gamma$  *crateris* is a binocular double with  $4^M$  and  $9^M$  components.

**NEBULÆ** The "Ghost of Jupiter" is an 8<sup>th</sup> magnitude planetary nebula low down in *Hydra* best seen with a 6"+ telescope.

**CLUSTERS** One of the best open clusters resides in *Cancer*. Præsepe or the Beehive Cluster extends twice the width of the full moon. It is visible as a large misty patch with the naked eye, but binoculars reveal some of the 300 stars that go to make it up.  
More challenging is M67, a smaller galactic cluster that really needs binoculars to detect it. This is a very ancient open cluster well above the plane of the galaxy.

**GALAXIES** The constellation of *Leo* houses many interesting galaxies, six of which you can see with large binoculars on a clear night since they are all 9<sup>th</sup> magnitude. M65 and M66 lie just under the rear leg. NGC 2903 lies at the end of the "sickle" shape of Leo's head. M95, M96 and M105 lie under the lion's body.