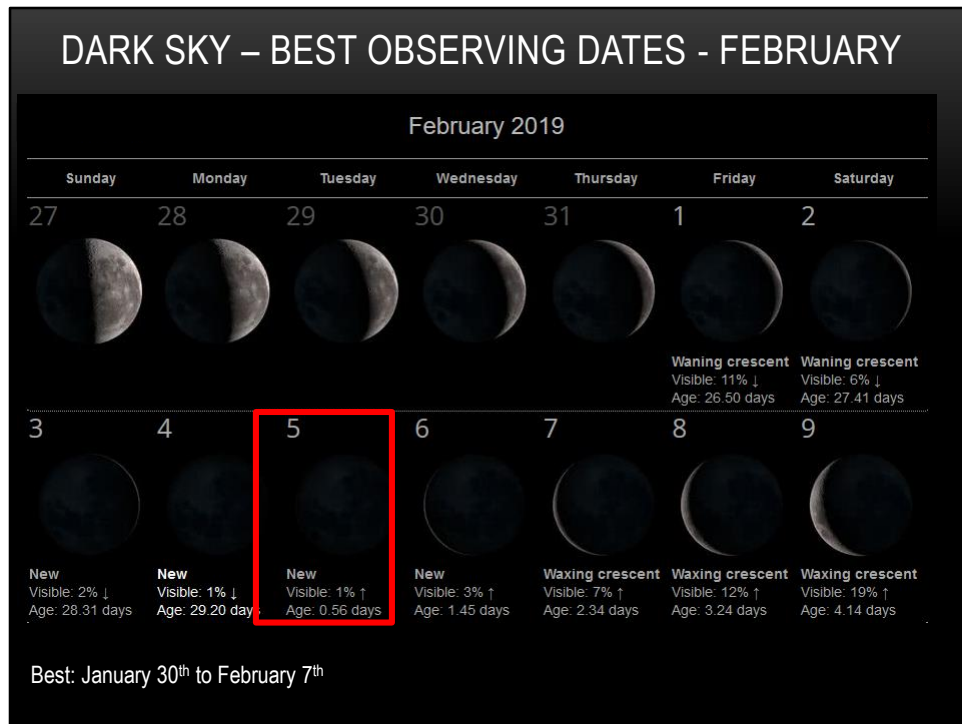


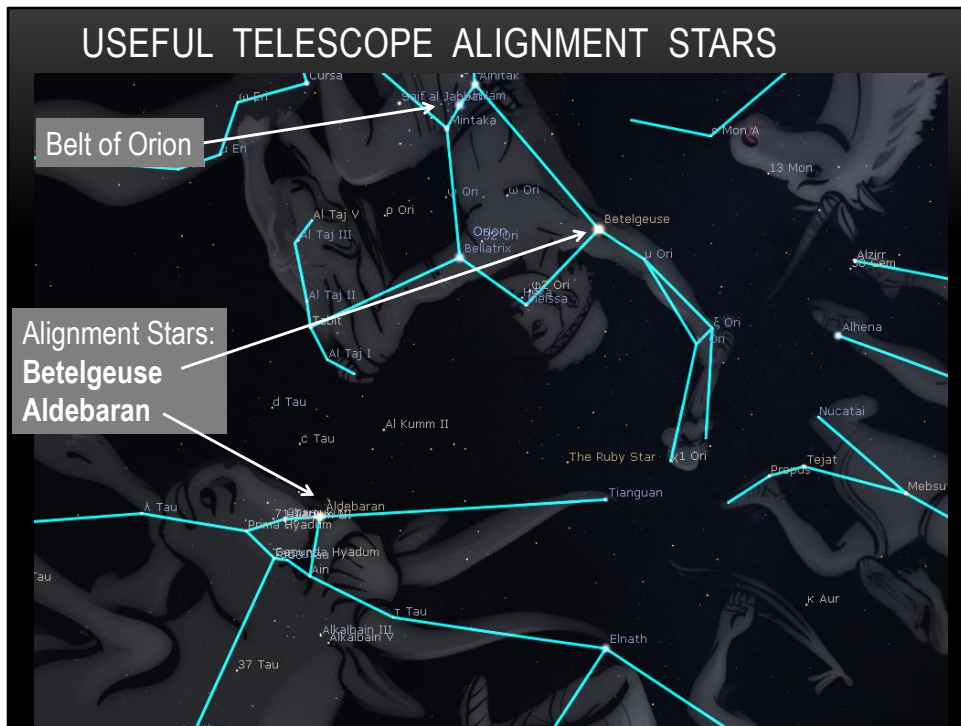
BAS - MONTHLY SKY GUIDE

February 2019

In February we have the outer spiral arms of our Milky Way Galaxy rising high overhead. This is a good time to explore the dense star fields stretching from Crux through Carina, Puppis, Canis Major, Orion and on to Auriga in the northern sky.

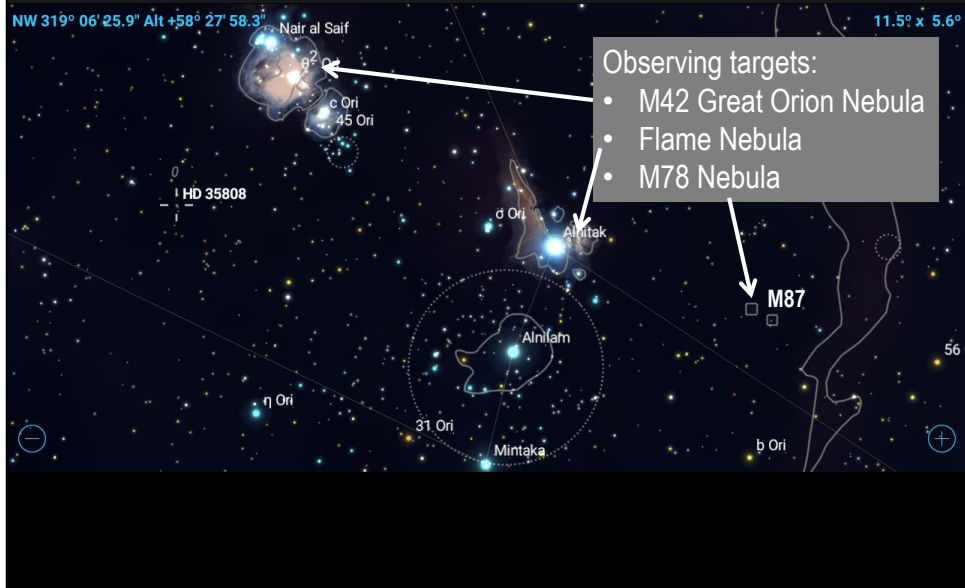


New Moon is Tuesday February 5th. A full evening of observing from sunset through to about midnight can be achieved for about a week prior to the New Moon. So plan your observing dates from about January 30th onwards. The slim waxing crescent of the early New Moon sets around the end of astronomical twilight on February 7th so the first few days after the February 5th New Moon are also uninterrupted by the Moon. However, from the 8th you may need to waste some early evening observing time waiting for the Moon to set and deliver a dark sky. So make good use of the period around January 30th to February 7th.

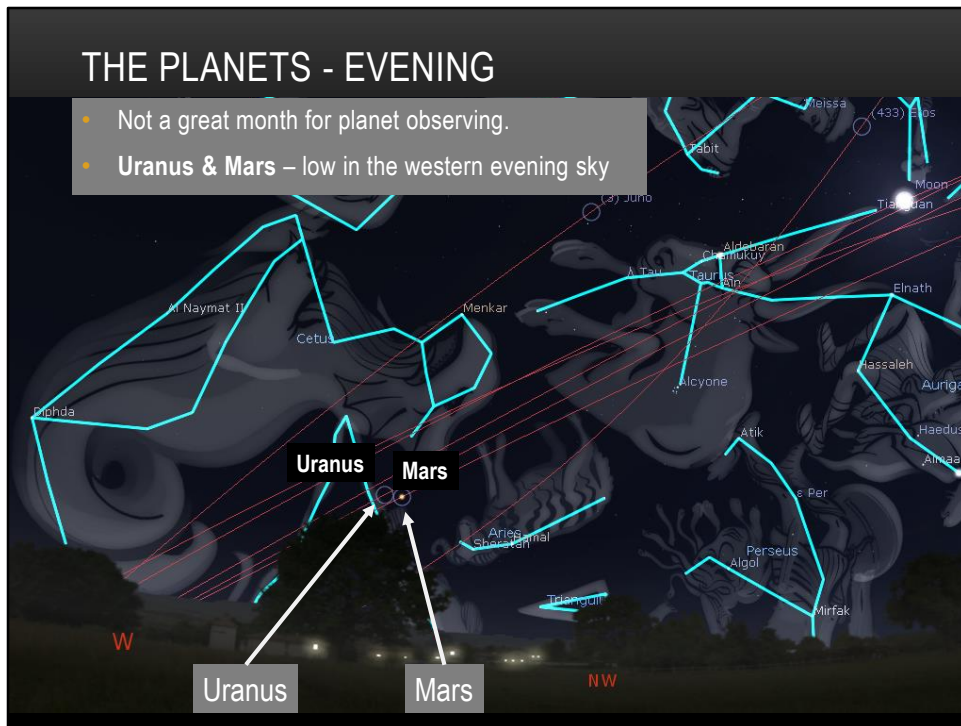


In mid-February around 8:00PM look in the high northern sky for the distinctive three stars of the Belt of Orion. Then look for the two orange coloured stars nearby – Betelgeuse and Aldebaran. These make good alignment stars as their distinctive colour makes them easy to recognise in the finder scope and telescope eyepiece. While two more widely separated stars might deliver a more accurate telescope alignment, these two stars are excellent stars for new telescope users to learn to locate as their orange colour is difficult to mistake.

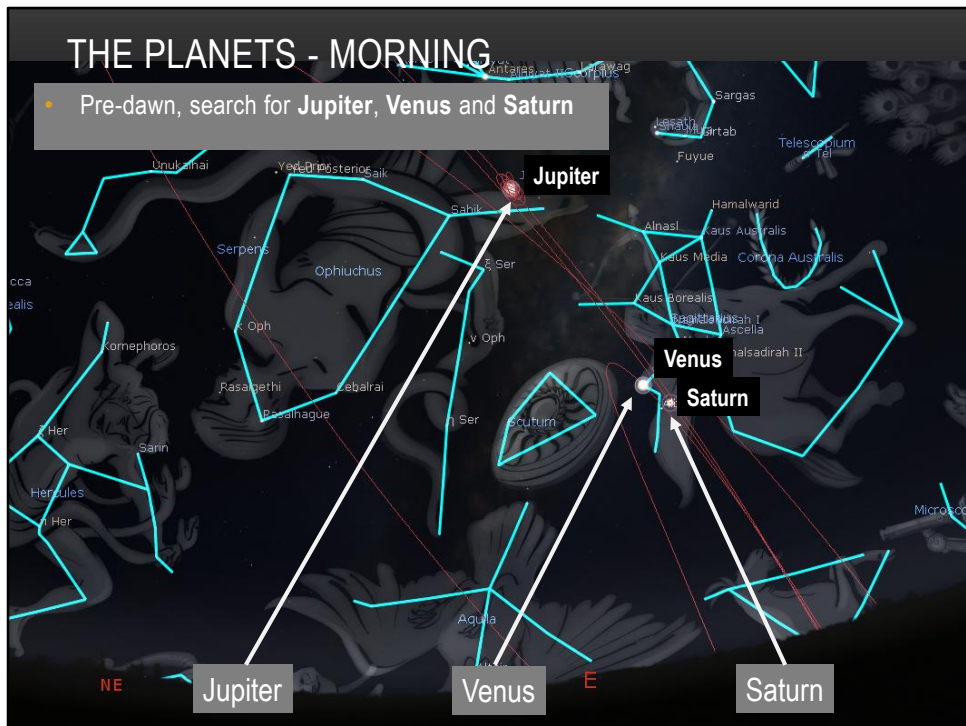
CONSTELLATION OF THE MONTH - ORION



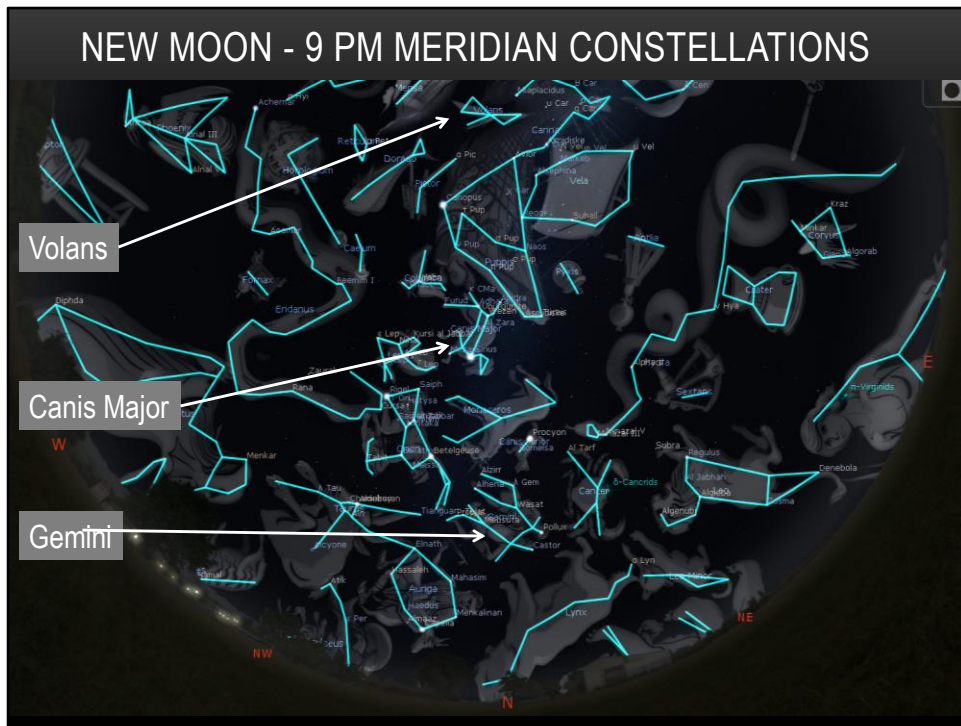
The Great Orion Nebular is one of the “show stopper” sights of astronomy. Located about 1,400 light years away and a major site of new star formation. The Flame Nebula is located about 820 light year away and is a massive molecular hydrogen gas cloud made to glow by the bright light from adjacent star Alnitak. The Nebula M78 is located about 1,600 light years away and resembles a faint comet.



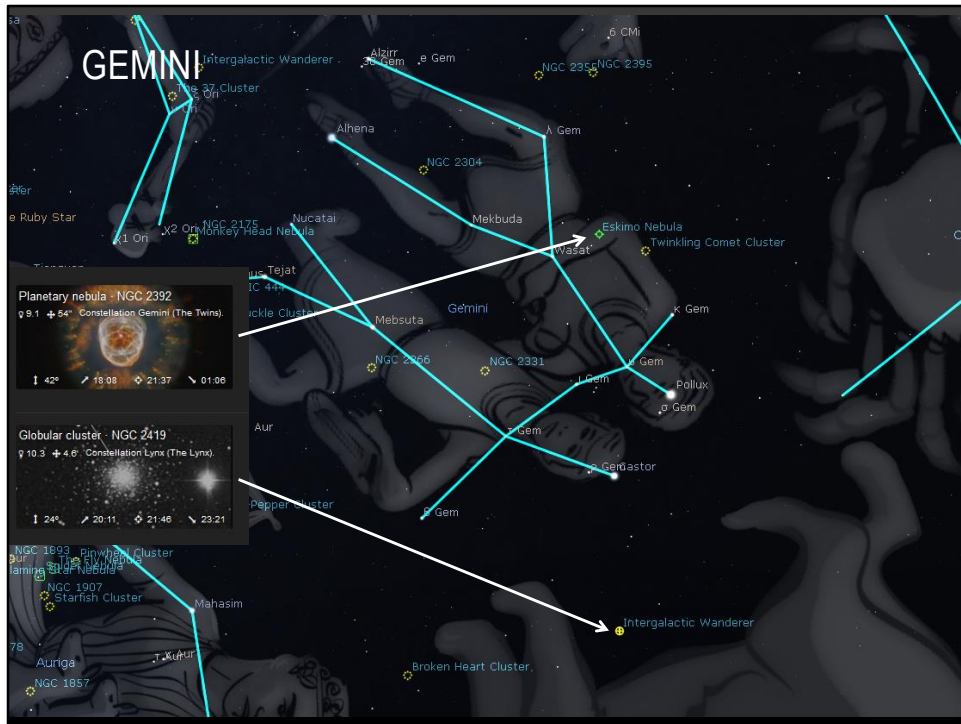
The opportunities for evening planet observing are deteriorating as the early months of 2019 march on. The only real opportunities are for a quick glimpse of Uranus and Mars in the low, and murky, western sky just after sunset.



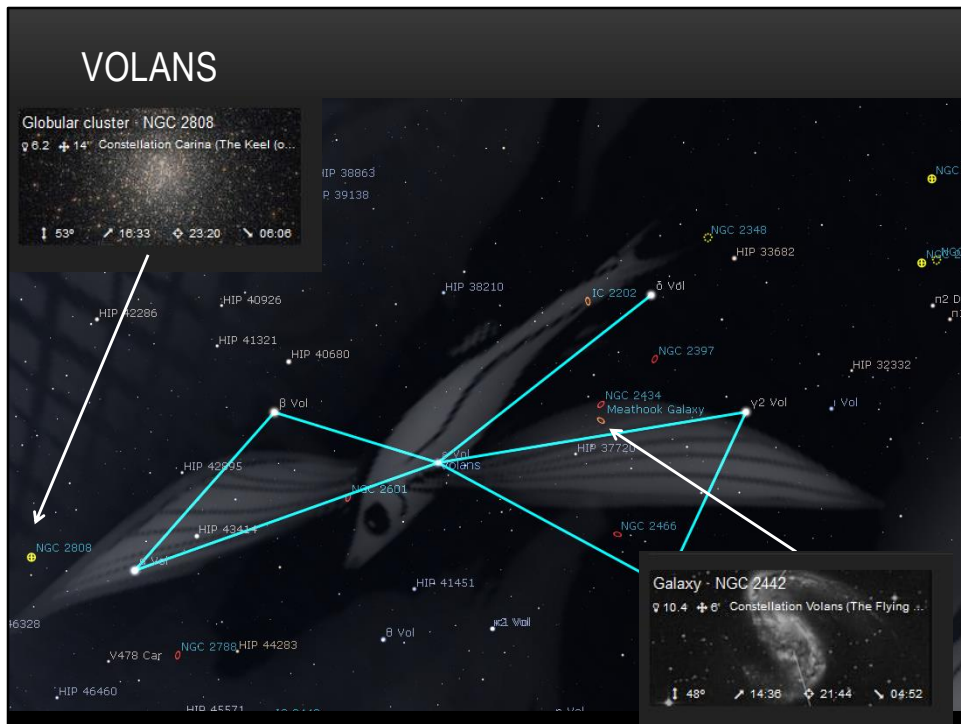
The major planets are returning from their orbital path behind the Sun and are now visible in the pre-dawn sky. Look for bright Jupiter, Venus and Saturn in the eastern sky around 4:00am. However, Jupiter, and particularly Saturn, are still months away from opposition and therefore rather small in the eyepiece.



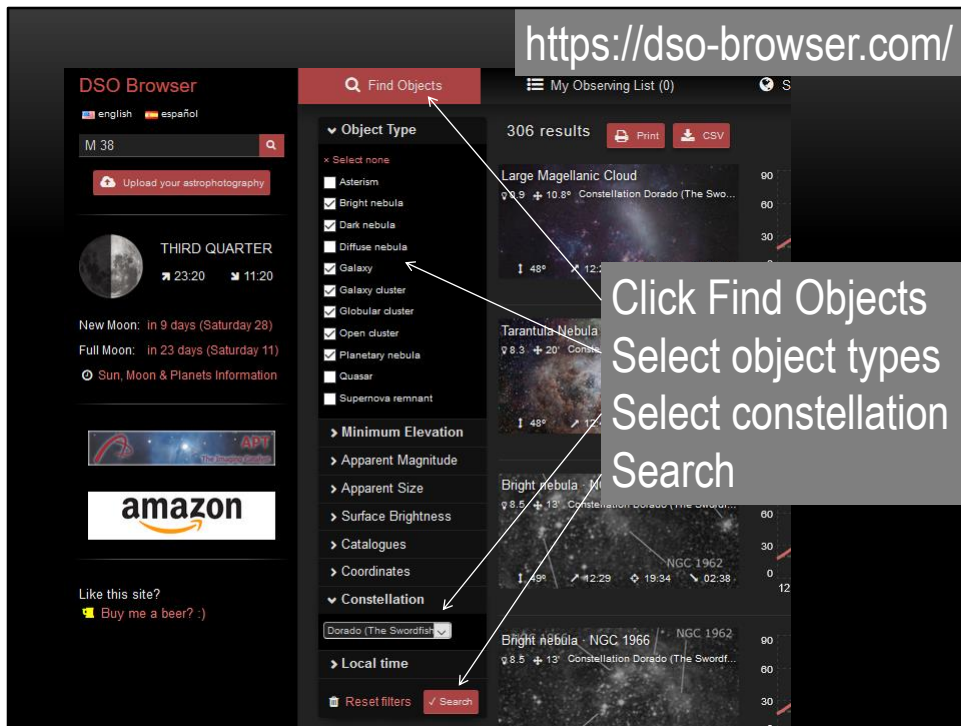
A few constellations high in the sky along the meridian at about 9 PM during the new Moon period are Gemini, Canis Major and Volans. All relatively easy constellations to recognise in a dark sky.



Gemini – The Twins best known for the twin stars of Castor and Pollux at the head of the twins. These two stars are the most prominent in the constellation and the best way to locate the constellation. Look for two bright but widely separated stars in the northern sky. In a dark sky seek out the planetary nebula NGC 2392, the Eskimo Nebula. Dim and diffuse at the eyepiece but worth trying for – located 4,200 light years away. Also search for the globular cluster NGC 2419. This is an intergalactic wanderer cluster well outside our Milky Way Galaxy. It is located about 270,000 light years from our Sun.

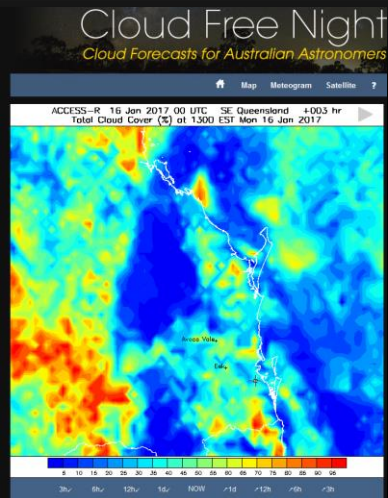


Volans, the Flying Fish, is located in the deep southern sky. See if you can find globular cluster NGC 2808 located 31,000 light years away. Much harder to spot is the faint galaxy NGC 2442, also known as The Meathook Galaxy, located 69 million light years away.

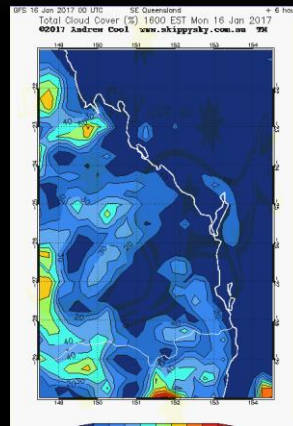


Just a few clicks on www.dso-browser.com can generate a fantastic observing list of object types you are interested in.

AVOIDING CLOUDS
www.cloudfreenight.com



www.skippysky.com



More info: <http://philhart.com/content/cloud-forecasts-australian-astronomers>

And the find the best cloud-free evenings for observing make sure you check CloudFreeNight and Skippysky as you plan your next observing evening.