

Note:

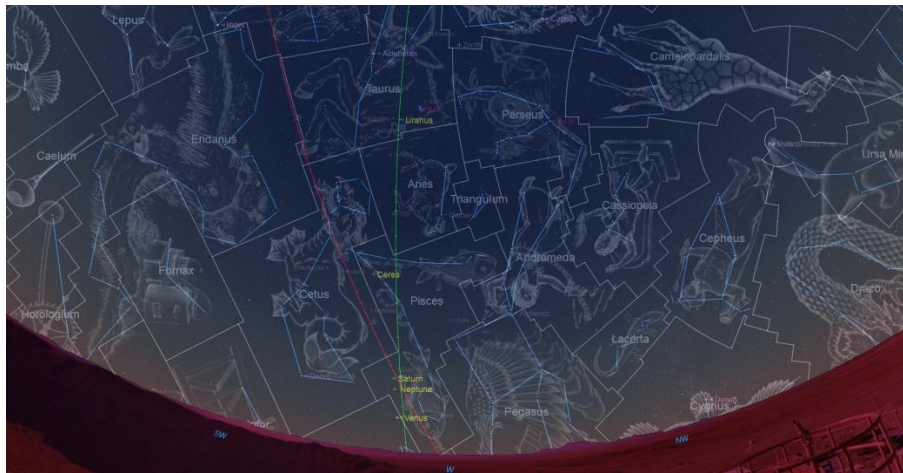
This has been a busy week, so I am behind in getting this Newsletter out. For that reason, I am doing it in two parts. The first part is primarily to get out timely information, especially the timings of the March 2/3 lunar eclipse.

March Special Events:

March Meteor Showers and Lunar Eclipse:

Unfortunately, there are no meteor showers this month, the second month in a row as pointed out by *Astronomy* magazine. *Astronomy* magazine notes that this is a good time to see the zodiacal light. The Sun's light scattering off small dust grains in the plane of Solar System After sunset, look to the west and from a dark site, you can see the zodiacal light looking like a cone, stretching from Mercury to Saturn. The best time to look for the light is after around March, when there is no Moon until after midnight. I am also reminding you of the upcoming total lunar eclipse. It occurs on the morning of March 3. Those of you on the East Coast will see the beginning of the event and those on the west coast will see all of it (or most of it in Tucson). The event starts at 3:43 a.m. EST (3 hours earlier on the West Coast and 2 hours earlier in Tucson, MST) when the Moon goes into the subtle penumbral shadow of the Earth. The partial eclipse starts at 4:50 a.m. EST and totality starts at 6:04 a.m. EST (3:04 a.m. on the West Coast). Totality lasts 59 minutes, so how much you see beyond that depends on how far west you are. Again, I found this hard to believe (I looked it up), but this is the last total lunar eclipse that is visible in the US until 2029. The partial phase ends at 6:18 a.m. MST.

Also, this weekend (February 28 and March 1) may be your last chance to see as many as 6 planets in the evening sky: Mercury and Venus, Saturn and Neptune, Uranus, and Jupiter. I will try to get a picture of this tonight (Saturday), but I will need a clear western horizon (sorry for the late notice). Anyway two of the planets (Neptune and Uranus) will need binoculars or a small telescope for you to see them. This is the sky for 6:30 February 28 looking West.

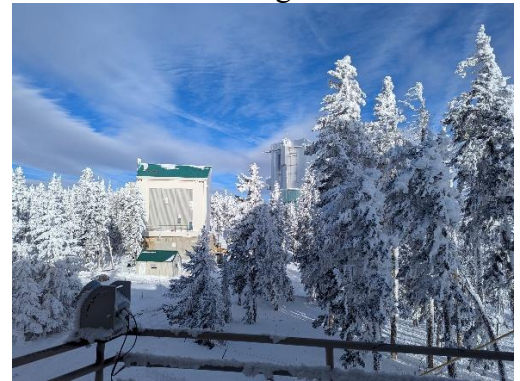


Some Pictures:

Here are some pictures from Laurie Ansorge. In her own words “First one is using the Sunspotter projection solar scope at a community festival. Next one is the phases of the lunar eclipse last March, with the Unistellar Odyssey Pro [congratulations]. Third is the 'trapezium' section of the great Orion nebula, which was a tricky exposure to not blow it out in that bright area! - 2/13/2026 with the Celestron Origin.”



It was mostly cloudy, but Tim Hunter got an image of the Moon and Mercury on February 18 (left below). Last last weekend starting February 20, I had three nights on the VATT. As is not unusual for January and February, it snowed for several days before we went to the telescope, and we were shut down the first night because of ice on the dome. After that, we had two of our best nights, observing newly discovered asteroids. Here are some pictures taken our first day. Pretty, but... We were able to clear off the dome and observe the second night.



Tuesday, Feb. 24, I was at a Family Science Night and have five more coming up in the next 2 months (along with Science Fair Judging and Tucson Festival of Books). On Wednesday, February 25, I gave a talk, *Classifying Solar System Objects*, to 40 retirees in Green Valley and on Thursday, I participated in an event with PSI at the Tucson Children's Museum.

Update on Comet MAPS:

Comet C/2026 A1 (MAPS) was discovered on January 13 and will have its closest to the Sun on April 4 and, if survives it closest approach to the Sun on April 4, it may be visible in the Northern Hemisphere about a week later, low in the east after sunset. However, the chances of it surviving perihelion passage on April 4 are considered to be small as it comes within 160,000 km (100,000 miles) of the surface of the Sun.

<https://spaceweather.com/archive.php?view=1&day=28&month=02&year=2026>



Comet C/2026 A1 (MAPS) and the Robin's Egg Nebula, taken by Gerald Rhemann and Michael Jager