

CAROLINA SKIES FEBRUARY-MARCH 2018

Hold this chart over your head. Find north, and align the chart accordingly. To see it while preserving your night vision, use a red light, or put a brown paper bag over your flashlight for a muted glow.

Winter constellations, Orion the Hunter, Taurus the Bull, and Gemini the Twins, begin to give way to spring patterns, Leo the Lion, Ursa Major the Great Bear, and Virgo the Maiden. Find Leo the Lion by locating the backward question mark mark that outlines his head and mane.

As February ends, **Venus** becomes visible in the early evening just above the western horizon, and climbs higher in evening twilight throughout March. **Mercury** then appears and performs a little dance with Venus in March, with the two passing closely around the 4th, and again on the 18th along with a thin crescent Moon. Giant **Jupiter** rises in the east late evening to early morning, followed by reddish **Mars**, which itself passes just north of the bright red star Antares in mid-February. Ringed **Saturn** rises in the southeast in the wee hours before dawn, joined alongside by Mars during late March.

Hear legends of love at “**Carolina Skies: Valentine Edition**” (for adults; evenings of Feb. 9, 10, 14). Our **Starry Nights** series for adults and teens continues with “**Spring Skies**” (Mar. 21). Our **Star Families** series aimed at families with children ages 7-12 continues with “**African Sky Stories**” (Feb. 24) and “**Anyone Out There?**” (Mar. 3).

Skywatching Sessions:

Stagville Under the Stars, Historic Stagville, Durham
Friday, February 23, 6 p.m.

(African star stories and telescope observing)

Little River Regional Park, Durham:

Friday, March 23, 8 - 10 p.m.

Admission to skywatching is free, telescopes are active, and constellation tours are provided. Sessions will be cancelled if weather is poor. For directions to the skywatching sites, cancellation updates, and information on astronomy and skywatching classes for children and adults, visit www.moreheadplanetarium.org, or call (919) 962-1236.

