



**Astronomical Society of Greenwich**  
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## **February 2012**

### **Monthly Meeting**

**Wednesday, February 1 – 7:30 PM**  
**“An Introduction to Kahn Academy”**

ASG members Bill Bambrick, Rick Bria, and Anne Burns will show you the ins and outs of this multifaceted online “academy.” Several informative short videos will be followed by a discussion of their scientific accuracy and educational value. Hope to see many of you there!

### **Bowman Observatory Public Nights** **(Weather Permitting)**

February 14 & 28 – 7-9 PM

March 13 & 27 – 8-10 PM

April 10 & 24 – 8:30-10:30 PM



### **Astronomy Family Day!**

**Sunday, February 12 -1-4 PM.** We’re expecting a big family audience this year, due to our Walter Wick exhibition, so we’ll need lots of helpers! So come and bring your astro-goodies – telescopes, books, photos, posters, gadgets – to display; hang out and inform our visitors about astronomy and the ASG; enjoy the **Starlab Planetarium**. Pizza and beverages will be provided for all helpers. Mark your calendar and plan to join us!

## Lunacy

February	7	Full Moon – “Snow Moon”
	10	Moon passes <b>Mars</b>
	11	Moon at perigee (228,616 miles from Earth)
	12	Moon passes <b>Saturn</b>
	14	Last Quarter Moon
	17	Moon passes <b>Pluto</b>
	21	New Moon passes <b>Neptune</b>
	22	Moon passes <b>Mercury</b>
	24	Moon passes <b>Uranus</b>
	25	Moon passes <b>Venus</b>
	27	Moon, at apogee (251,570 miles from Earth), passes <b>Jupiter</b>
	30	First Quarter Moon



## News of the Worlds

**Venus** is still our bright “evening star,” moving eastward and thus setting several minutes later each evening (it’ll be up until 9:30 PM by March 1), and brightening from mag.-4.1 to mag.-4.3 during the month. Between February 3 and 15, Venus and **Uranus** (mag.5.9) can be seen in the same binocular field, with their closest approach ( $0.3^\circ$ ) on the 9<sup>th</sup>. And on February 25, Venus and the crescent Moon have another beautiful conjunction.

**Mercury** zips around behind the sun, reaching superior conjunction on February 7 and emerging in the evening sky several days later. Look to the left of the crescent Moon on February 22, to see our innermost planet shining at mag.-1.2. (Both set around 6:40 PM.) Like Venus, Mercury keeps moving east for a while, reaching its greatest elongation ( $18^\circ$  east of the sun) March 5.

Meanwhile, **Jupiter** (in *Aries*) is moving west (and will meet Venus next month). Our largest planet shines at mag.-2.3 and is up most of the evening, setting around midnight at the beginning of February and at 10:30 by month’s end. On February 22, Jupiter’s moon *Europa* transits the planet’s disk. Through a telescope, you can see its shadow between 7:40 and 10 PM.

Next comes **Mars**, doubling in brightness from mag.-0.5 to -1.2 as it heads for opposition early next month. Its rising time progresses quickly from 8:20 to 5:40 PM as it moves from the western part of *Virgo* to *Leo* during February.

It may surprise you to hear that **Saturn**, which rises more than three hours later, at 11:30, is also in *Virgo* this month. However, *Virgo* is about  $45^\circ$  wide (it’s the second-largest constellation, after *Hydra*), so it takes almost three hours for all of it to appear above the horizon. Look for golden Saturn (mag. 0.5) at its eastern end, near its brightest star, blue-white *Spica* (mag.1). By March 1 both will be rising at 9:30.

**Neptune** hides behind the Sun this month, reaching conjunction on the 19<sup>th</sup> and reappearing in the predawn sky in late March.