

It was a welcome return for the February meeting by Steve Tonkin and Bob Mizon. Steve's talk this time was on "10 Ways the Universe Tries to Kill You" which was a fairly light hearted run through some of the dangers facing a small blue-green planet on the unfashionable end of the galaxy.

Some of the dangers are unlikely, like getting hit by the collimated energy jet from a Gamma Ray Burst, while one or two are inevitable, like the expansion of the Sun at the end of its life. The one consistent theme, though, was there was little we could do about it ☹️ Possibly one exception was deflecting an incoming asteroid which some experiments are at least being tried. Probably, though, the greatest danger to the planet is the people living on it while the universe carries on in its unconcerned way.

After the break, Bob gave one of his signature Object of the Month talks on Wasat aka Delta Geminorum. In itself not a particularly exciting star but it did form the backdrop to the discovery of Pluto in 1930 by Clyde Tombaugh.

Terry gave a look at forthcoming events (see the end of this entry) and reported on the recent Outreach events. Manor Court School and Redstart Primary, both in Chard, on Thursday 26th January was clouded out and we had to do a Plan B talk. This went well at Redstart, though giving the same 10 minute talk 6 times was surprisingly tiring. The event at Manor Court was a bit less well planned, though! Ash Primary, Martock on Thursday 9th February provided excellent conditions with good views of Jupiter and C/2022 E3.

Terry and Ken finished off the evening with some images of Jupiter and Venus getting closer in the evening sky, Pete Adshead's excellent image of C/2022 E3 ZTF from Ash Primary and Ken's very nice narrowband images of some emission nebulae.

Next Month's meeting is on 15th March and will be by Hugh Allen on Spectroscopy : Cracking starlight's hidden code.

Upcoming Events

Planets

Venus getting higher and brighter in the evening sky

Venus very close to Jupiter March 1st

Mars prominent later moving through Taurus to Gemini

Ex Naked-eye Comet C/2022 E3 ZTF

Perihelion was January 12th

Closest approach was 1 st February

Currently close to Aldebaran

Now fading rapidly and moving southward West of Orion

Meeting Schedule

April 19 Will Gater Drawing Inspiration from the Moon

May 17 Ask the Panel

June 21 Jo Richardson Dark skies of Exmoor

CPRE Annual Star Count

See <https://www.cpre.org.uk/>

Just needs counting the number of stars inside Orion and submitting. For reference, I usually manage around 25-30.

SOMERSET LEVELS STARGAZERS

WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 22nd 2023 7.30PM OTHERY VILLAGE HALL TA7 0QS

THE DEATH OF STARS RICHARD & SUE HORSHAM + Night sky guide/Astronomy news

somersetlevelsstargazers@hotmail.com for details

Taunton to Bridgwater Canal Solar System Model

South Somerset Astronomical Society is looking to add a set of markers to show the annual movement of Halley's Comet in from aphelion (this year) to the next perihelion in 2061.

Nick O'Donnell coming for the May meeting to expand further.

I have his "business plan" for anyone who wants to get involved earlier