

What's Up in the Night Sky for MARCH



Presented by

Adventure Science Center Nightwatch - Bill McClain
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2a0s_DdDlfc

Tonight's Sky: March

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1tBzl8SAytE>

10 AMAZING FACTS

This month's 10 amazing facts are about the Sun.

1. **Our Sun is a star, but not just any star, it's a yellow dwarf star.** Stars come in a wide range of sizes and temperatures, and our Sun falls somewhere in the middle. It's about 4.5 billion years old and is expected to live for another 5 billion years.
2. **It's a giant ball of hot plasma, mostly consisting of hydrogen (about 73%) and helium (about 25%).** The Sun's core temperature is about 15 million degrees Celsius (27 million degrees Fahrenheit), hot enough to cause hydrogen atoms to fuse together in a process called nuclear fusion, which releases tremendous amounts of energy in the form of light and heat.
3. **The Sun is massive, but not the most massive star in the universe.** It has a diameter of about 1.39 million kilometers (864,000 miles), which is about 109 times the diameter of Earth. Despite its size, it's only about one-thousandth the mass of the entire Milky Way galaxy.
4. **The Sun is not solid, it has no surface we could stand on.** The Sun's outer layer, called the photosphere, is the part we see as a bright light. It's made up of hot plasma, a state of matter where atoms are stripped of their electrons and the nuclei move freely.

5. **The Sun's gravity is what holds our solar system together.** Its gravity keeps all the planets, dwarf planets, asteroids, comets, and other objects in their orbits around it.
6. **The Sun has a powerful atmosphere, called the corona, which extends millions of kilometers into space.** The corona is much hotter than the Sun's surface, reaching millions of degrees Celsius. It's also the source of the solar wind, a stream of charged particles that flows outward from the Sun throughout the solar system.
7. **The Sun has a magnetic field called the heliosphere, which extends far beyond the orbit of Pluto.** This magnetic field helps to protect Earth from harmful radiation from the Sun and other sources in space.
8. **The Sun is constantly changing, with eruptions on its surface called solar flares and coronal mass ejections (CMEs).** These eruptions can send charged particles and radiation streaming outward into space, which can sometimes disrupt satellites and power grids on Earth.
9. **The Sun is essential for life on Earth.** The Sun's light provides the energy that plants need to photosynthesize, which is the basis of the food chain. The Sun's heat also helps to regulate Earth's climate.
10. **We can't look directly at the Sun with our naked eyes.** The Sun's light is too intense and can damage our eyes. Looking directly at the Sun can cause solar retinopathy, which can lead to permanent vision loss. There are special telescopes that can be used to safely observe the Sun. These telescopes use filters to block out most of the Sun's light, allowing us to study its surface and atmosphere in detail.

The last fact relates to the solar eclipse which will occur on April 8, 2024. Never look at the sun directly ever. During the eclipse there are ways to view it directly and indirectly. In the next email I will cover this and hands-on activities that relate to how eclipses occur.



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