
MARCH 2012
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1
00:00:00,000 --> 00:00:02,000
Music

2
00:00:02,000 --> 00:00:07,000
Jane Houston Jones: What's Up for March. View Mars at opposition and planet highlights galore.

3
00:00:07,000 --> 00:00:11,000
Hello and welcome. I'm Jane Houston Jones at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory

4
00:00:11,000 --> 00:00:13,000
in Pasadena, California.

5
00:00:13,000 --> 00:00:18,000
Not a week goes by this month when there isn't an amazing planetary view.

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00:00:18,000 --> 00:00:24,000
On March 3 Mars reaches opposition, when it's closest to Earth in its 2-year orbit.

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00:00:24,000 --> 00:00:27,000
This year Mars won't be very close, though.

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00:00:27,000 --> 00:00:33,000
At best, it will be 63 million miles or 112 million kilometers from Earth.

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00:00:33,000 --> 00:00:41,000
At each future opposition until 2018, Mars will be closer to Earth and will appear even more impressive.

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00:00:41,000 --> 00:00:45,000
Even though you'll need a telescope to see any markings -- like the north polar cap --

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00:00:45,000 --> 00:00:50,000
it's fun to imagine where NASA's Mars landers and rovers are.

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00:00:50,000 --> 00:00:53,000
The Phoenix lander site is not too far from the north pole,

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00:00:53,000 --> 00:00:57,000

while the rovers Spirit and Opportunity are closer to the equator of Mars.

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00:00:57,000 --> 00:00:59,000
Rocket sounds.

15
00:00:59,000 --> 00:01:04,000
Jones: NASA's Mars Science Laboratory Curiosity rover will land in Gale Crater in August.

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00:01:04,000 --> 00:01:07,000
Rocket sounds.

17
00:01:07,000 --> 00:01:12,000
Jones: On March 5 Mercury reaches its highest altitude in the sunset sky.

18
00:01:12,000 --> 00:01:16,000
You'll easily see its phase through a telescope.

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00:01:16,000 --> 00:01:21,000
Have you been watching Jupiter and Venus, the two bright planets in the west?

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00:01:21,000 --> 00:01:25,000
On March 12 and 13 they meet and pass one another.

21
00:01:25,000 --> 00:01:31,000
Venus is the brighter of the two, and through a telescope you can see its half-lit phase.

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00:01:31,000 --> 00:01:36,000
Use the moon as a guide to Mars on March 7 late in the evening.

23
00:01:36,000 --> 00:01:39,000
And let the moon guide you to Saturn on the 10th and 11th.

24
00:01:39,000 --> 00:01:43,000
At sunset on the 25th look for the moon near Jupiter.

25
00:01:43,000 --> 00:01:47,000
On the 26th it's near Venus.

26
00:01:47,000 --> 00:01:54,000
If you didn't catch Comet Garradd last month, don't worry. It's still putting on a great display this month.

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00:01:54,000 --> 00:01:59,000
Look between the Big and Little Dippers to see it through a telescope, even from your back yard in the city.

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00:01:59,000 --> 00:02:03,000
March 20 is Sun-Earth Day.

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00:02:03,000 --> 00:02:08,000
Many people around the world will celebrate it on or near the spring Equinox: March 19 or 20

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00:02:08,000 --> 00:02:14,000
with safe solar viewing parties, the only way you should ever look directly at the sun.

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00:02:14,000 --> 00:02:19,000
And there should be more safe solar viewing parties for the June 5 transit of Venus.

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00:02:19,000 --> 00:02:25,000
Lucky observers will see the planet Venus as it crosses the disc of the sun.

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00:02:25,000 --> 00:02:30,000
A great way to prepare yourself for this is to find a local astronomy club

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00:02:30,000 --> 00:02:34,000
or look for sky-watching events at your local museum.

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00:02:34,000 --> 00:02:39,000
You can check out amazing solar images, including sunspots, flares and storms on the sun

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00:02:39,000 --> 00:02:43,000
at NASA's Solar Dynamics Observatory website.

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00:02:43,000 --> 00:02:50,000
And you can learn about all of NASA's missions to the solar system and beyond at w w w dot NASA dot gov.