

WHAT'S UP

February 2016



1
00:00:00,000 --> 00:00:04,000

Music

2
00:00:04,000 --> 00:00:05,000

Jane Houston Jones: What's Up for February.

3
00:00:05,000 --> 00:00:09,000

Five morning planets, comet Catalina passes Polaris

4
00:00:09,000 --> 00:00:14,000

and icy Uranus and icy Vesta meet near Valentine's Day.

5
00:00:14,000 --> 00:00:21,000

Hello and welcome. I'm Jane Houston Jones from NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, California.

6
00:00:21,000 --> 00:00:28,000

February mornings feature Mercury, Venus, Saturn Mars and Jupiter lined up across the sky.

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00:00:28,000 --> 00:00:33,000

The last time this five-planet dawn lineup happened was in 2005.

8
00:00:33,000 --> 00:00:37,000

The planets are easy to distinguish when you use the moon as your guide.

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00:00:37,000 --> 00:00:42,000

Look for reddish Mars near the moon in the early morning of February first.

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00:00:42,000 --> 00:00:47,000

Then, on the third, the moon passes near butterscotch-hued Saturn.

11
00:00:47,000 --> 00:00:54,000

On the sixth the moon, Mercury and Venus make a pretty triangle before sunrise.

12
00:00:54,000 --> 00:00:59,000

Then it's Jupiter's turn to pose with the moon on the 23rd.

13
00:00:59,000 --> 00:01:05,000

Through a telescope, Jupiter's pale yellow is transformed into bands of cream, ochre and tan.

14

00:01:05,000 --> 00:01:11,000

Finally, the moon passes Mars again on Leap Day, February 29th.

15

00:01:11,000 --> 00:01:14,000

In case you miss the string of planetary pearls this month,

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00:01:14,000 --> 00:01:18,000

you can see all five planets again in August's sunset sky,

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00:01:18,000 --> 00:01:24,000

though Venus and Mercury will be very close to the horizon for Northern Hemisphere observers.

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00:01:24,000 --> 00:01:25,000

Sound: Whoosh.

19

00:01:25,000 --> 00:01:30,000

Jones: Last month comet Catalina's curved dust tail and straight ion tail

20

00:01:30,000 --> 00:01:33,000

were visible in binoculars and telescopes

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00:01:33,000 --> 00:01:37,000

near two galaxies that are close to the handle of the Big Dipper.

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00:01:37,000 --> 00:01:41,000

Early this month, the comet nears Polaris, the North Star.

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00:01:41,000 --> 00:01:45,000

It should be visible all month long for Northern Hemisphere observers.

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00:01:45,000 --> 00:01:51,000

There will be more opportunities to photograph comet Catalina paired with other objects this month.

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00:01:51,000 --> 00:01:56,000

It passes the faint spiral galaxy IC 342

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00:01:56,000 --> 00:02:03,000

and a pretty planetary nebula named NGC 1501 between February 10th and the 29th.

27

00:02:03,000 --> 00:02:07,000

For binoculars viewers, the magnitude-6 comet pairs up with

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00:02:07,000 --> 00:02:13,000

a pretty string of stars known as Kemble's Cascade on February 24th.

29

00:02:13,000 --> 00:02:14,000

Sound: Whoosh.

30

00:02:14,000 --> 00:02:19,000

Jones: Finally, through binoculars you should be able to pick out Vesta and Uranus

31

00:02:19,000 --> 00:02:21,000

near one another this month.

32

00:02:21,000 --> 00:02:24,000

You can use the moon as a guide on the 12th

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00:02:24,000 --> 00:02:27,000

and the corner stars of Pegasus all month long.

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00:02:27,000 --> 00:02:31,000

You can learn about NASA's missions to the planets and beyond at

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00:02:31,000 --> 00:02:34,000

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