

Our Night Sky for March 17th, 2025

The hour that we added to our clocks last weekend has certainly changed our night skies. As the sun's light washes out dimmer stars until about eight or nine pm and the planets have already set below the western horizon or are only available if you have a telescope. I always predict at least a couple of spring weeks of pleasant clear evening around this time of year but a few degrees warmer would be nice. We have previously located the constellation Orion which is well placed right now high above due south. Here are some easy to spot bright stars. First a word about describing a star's brightness. A star with a lower or negative number is brighter. The sun has a magnitude of -26.7 and the moon is a magnitude of -12.7. One of the brightest stars is Sirius with a magnitude of -1.44. Sirius is the bright star left and down from Orion. Another bright star is the lower right of Orion is Rigel. Rigel has a magnitude of 0.18.

The magnitude scale is non linear, a single count represents a change in brightness of about two and a half times. This means researchers can make very precise measurements and learn a great deal about the processes that power stars and changes them over time.

If you would like to learn more about stars magnitude you can do a search for a magnitude chart of the big dipper. The big dipper is easy to find overhead and has a good mix of various magnitudes. See if you can spot the slight differences of stars in our night sky.