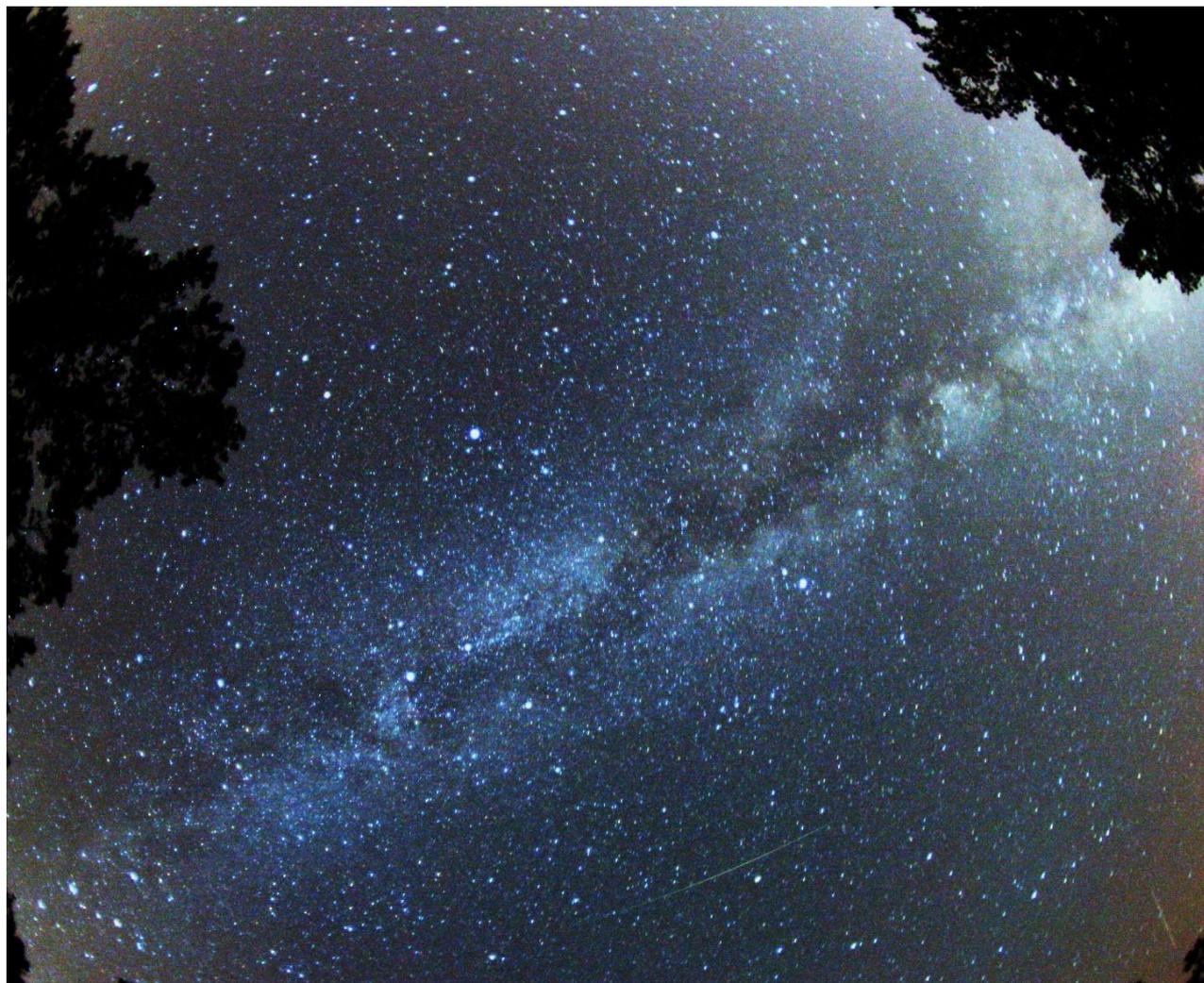


Wollongong Skywatch Magazine

Illawarra • South Coast NSW

March 2026 • Local times AEDT • Latitude ~34.4°S



Cover: "Perseid and Milky Way" (Brocken Inaglory) – Wikimedia Commons (CC BY-SA).

Blood Moon Eclipse • Comets • Overhead Constellations Tour • DIY Harmonic Mount (Layman's Guide)

Contents

Pg	Section
1	Sky Snapshot (best nights + quick plan)
2	Feature: 3 Mar Total Lunar Eclipse (Blood Moon)
3	Planet Watch (Venus + Saturn, Jupiter, Mars)
4	Comets Corner (what's worth trying from NSW)
5	Overhead Constellations Tour (extra constellations + targets + small pics)
6	Moon Guide (phases + best nights)
7	Deep-Sky Targets (easy → challenge)
8	DIY Harmonic Mount (how harmonic drives work — layman)
9	Sources & Image Credits

Sky Snapshot — Wollongong (March 2026)

Best dark window

- 20–24 March: best for deep sky + comets.
- March evenings: Southern Cross region is high overhead.

Quick plan

- 1) Carina Nebula or Jewel Box for instant wow.
- 2) Omega Cen / 47 Tuc for ‘sparkling snowballs’.
- 3) Try a comet if the air is dry and dark.

Moon phases



Moon phases graphic (NASA/JPL-Caltech).

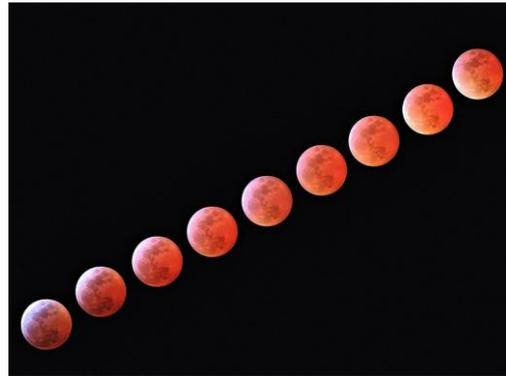
March 2026 Total Lunar Eclipse (Blood Moon)

What’s happening

Earth’s shadow crosses the Moon. During totality the Moon turns copper-red because sunlight is filtered through Earth’s atmosphere.

Photo quick-start

Phone: Night mode + tripod. DSLR: 200–600mm, ISO 400–1600, f/5.6–f/8, 1/125–1s (adjust as it reddens).



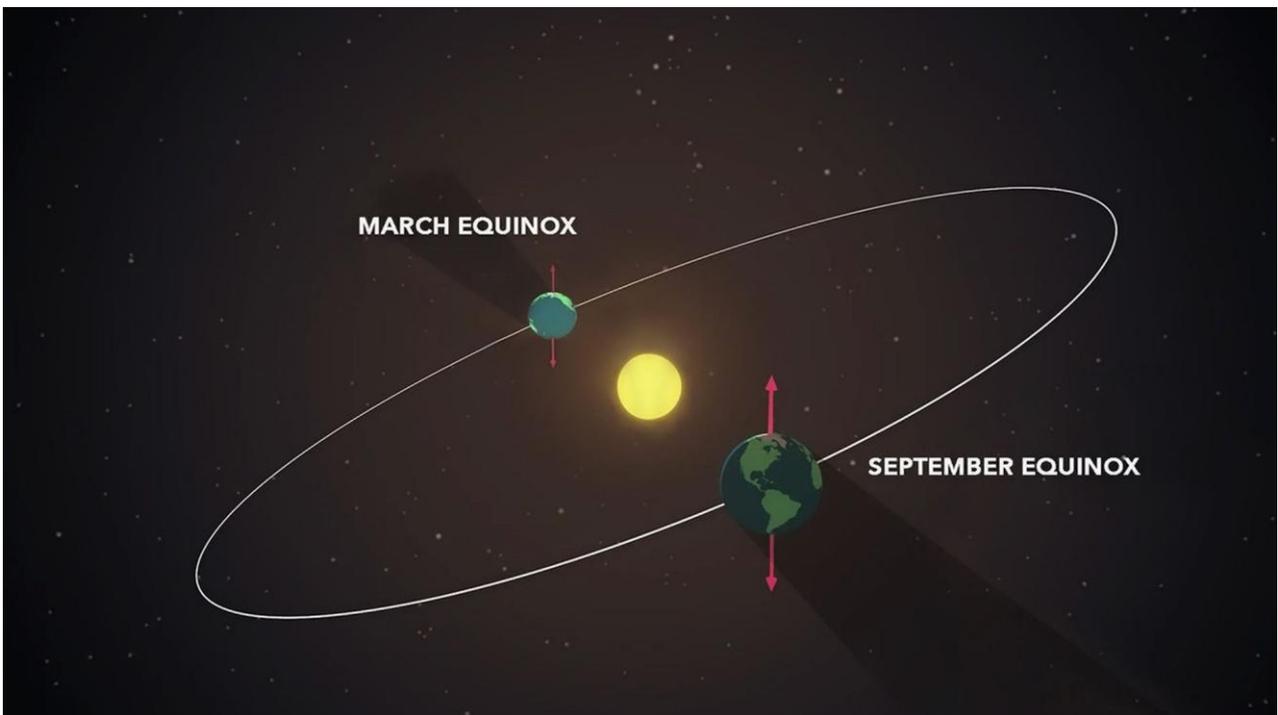
Example eclipse progression (CC0) – Wikimedia Commons (Giuseppe Donatiello).

Planet Watch — March 2026 (Wollongong)

Venus + Saturn are close low in the west after sunset early March. Jupiter stays bright higher up.



Venus + Saturn conjunction chart (NASA/JPL-Caltech).



March equinox diagram (NASA/GSFC).

Comets Corner — What's Worth Trying From NSW (March 2026)

Comets are usually faint from coastal Wollongong. Best recipe: dark Moon + dry air + exact finder chart/app.

Watch list

- C/2024 E1 (Wierzchoś): fading after mid-Feb; still worth a look from dark sites.
- 88P/Howell: perihelion mid-March; small-telescope comet.
- C/2026 A1 (MAPS): could become interesting late March → early April, but brightness is uncertain.

Small comet pics



Comet NEOWISE (example photo) – Wikimedia Commons.

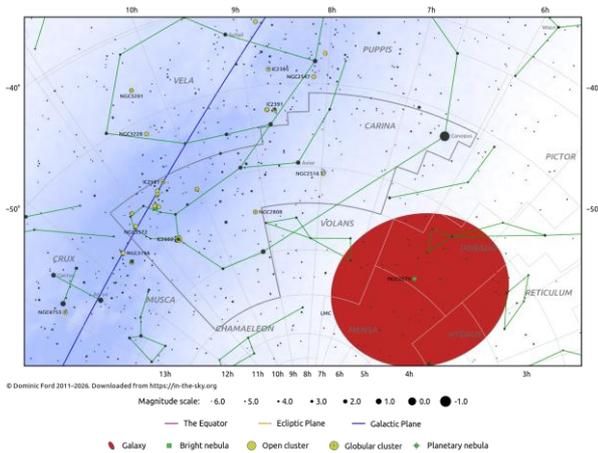


Comet Lemmon from the ISS (NASA/JSC) – Wikimedia Commons.

Overhead Constellations Tour — Wollongong March Evenings

These are the star-rich constellations that sit high in the southern sky around 8–11 pm in March from Wollongong. Each has easy ‘wow’ targets.

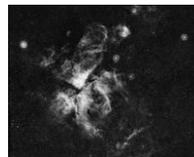
Carina



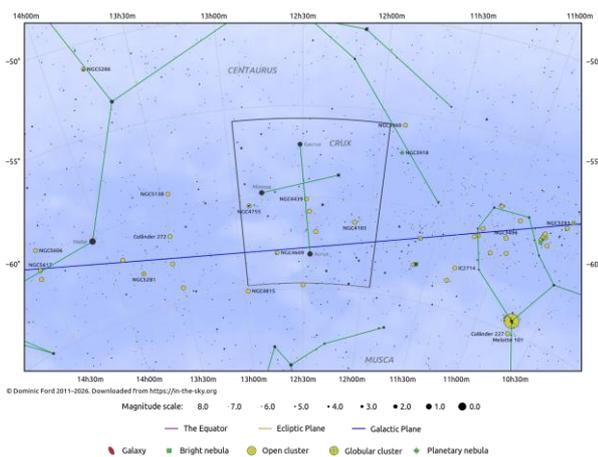
Finder chart: Carina (In-The-Sky.org).

Top targets

- Carina Nebula (NGC 3372) — massive glowing cloud; amazing in any scope
- IC 2602 (Southern Pleiades) — bright binocular cluster
- NGC 3532 / NGC 2516 — rich open clusters for widefield photos



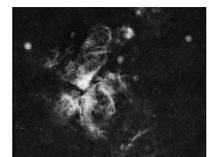
Crux (Southern Cross)



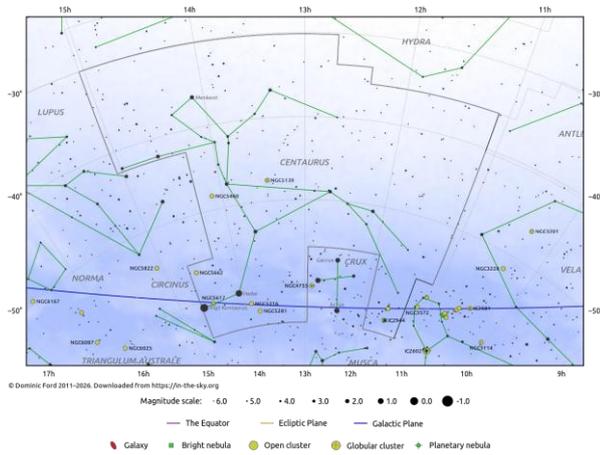
Finder chart: Crux (Southern Cross) (In-The-Sky.org).

Top targets

- Jewel Box (NGC 4755) — tiny ‘blue diamonds’ cluster
- Coalsack — dark nebula patch (best from dark sites)
- Milky Way star fields — sweep with binoculars



Centaurus



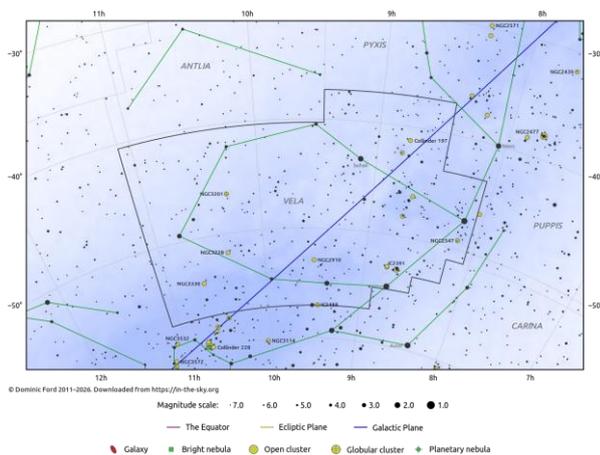
Finder chart: Centaurus (In-The-Sky.org).

Top targets

- Omega Centauri (NGC 5139) — biggest globular; naked-eye fuzzy ball
- Centaurus A (NGC 5128) — galaxy with a dark dust lane
- Alpha + Beta Centauri ('the Pointers') — point to the Cross



Vela



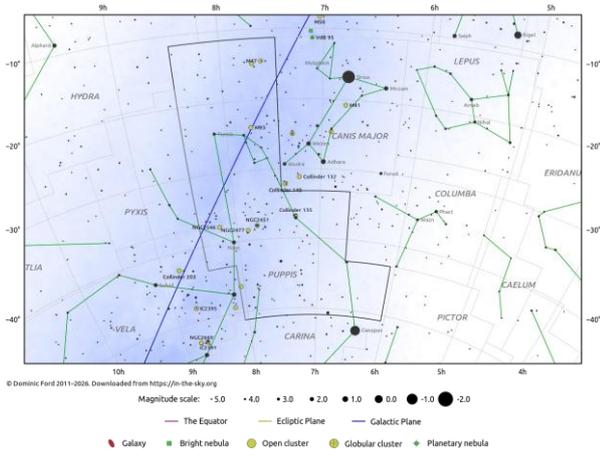
Finder chart: Vela (In-The-Sky.org).

Top targets

- Vela Supernova Remnant — huge + faint; best photographed
- NGC 2547 — open cluster
- False Cross — learn it so you don't confuse it with Crux



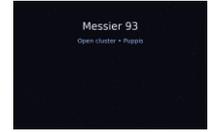
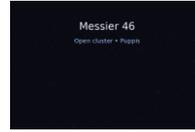
Puppis



Finder chart: Puppis (In-The-Sky.org).

Top targets

- M46 — open cluster (small scope)
- M47 — bright binocular cluster
- M93 — compact cluster at medium power



Moon Guide — Observing & Imaging

Deep-sky: plan your main session for 20–24 March. Lunar detail: First Quarter gives strong shadows for craters.

Deep-Sky Targets — Easy → Challenge

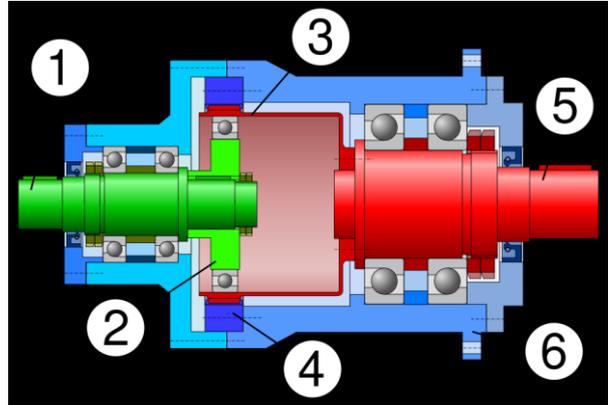
Level	Target	Why it's good
Easy	Carina Nebula (NGC 3372)	Bright + huge; works even from suburbs.
Easy	Jewel Box (NGC 4755)	Small, colourful cluster near the Cross.
Easy	Omega Centauri (NGC 5139)	Big globular; naked eye from dark skies.
Mid	Centaurus A (NGC 5128)	Bright galaxy; dust lane is a 'wow' in photos.
Mid	47 Tucanae (NGC 104)	Bright globular; star-packed core.
Challenge	Vela SNR	Best with camera + filters; massive structure.

DIY Harmonic Mount — How the Drive Works (Layman)

A harmonic drive is a compact gearbox that turns a fast motor into slow, controlled motion for tracking the stars.



Parts: wave generator (oval cam), flexspline (thin cup), circular spline (rigid ring).



Cross-section: the oval cam makes the cup engage the ring in two spots.

Key idea: the cup has a couple fewer teeth than the ring. Each motor turn only advances the output a tiny amount (often ~100:1 reduction).



Astrophilos-style DIY harmonic mount build example (reference image).

Sources & Image Credits

- In-The-Sky.org: constellation finder charts used for Carina, Centaurus, Crux, Vela, Puppis.
- ESO: Centaurus A (NGC 5128) image.
- NASA Science: 47 Tucanae image.
- Sky & Telescope: Jewel Box (NGC 4755) gallery image.
- NASA Skywatching: moon phases, Venus+Saturn chart, equinox diagram.
- Wikimedia Commons: cover Milky Way, eclipse progression, comet example images.
- Small 'object cards' are custom-made placeholders where no public-domain photo was bundled.