The Night Sky

On June 21st, the sun is at its highest point in the northern sky, the summer solstice, at 1:16 p.m. EDT. This marks the beginning of summer in the northern hemisphere and is the day with the longest amount of daylight hours for the year. The moon is at full phase at 4:14 p.m. EDT on June 15th, and the evening prior to this, the moon will be just to the left of the bright red supergiant star Antares in the southern sky.

During the evenings in June, Saturn is very prominent in the southwest sky and remains very close to the 3rd magnitude star Gamma Virginis (Porrima) all month. The planet Mercury can be seen low in the western sky during the last two weeks of the month within an hour after sunset. On June 30th Mercury makes a straight line on the sky with Gemini's two brightest stars Castor and Pollux -- Mercury will be the bright object on the left of this threesome. One will need an unobstructed western horizon in order to see Mercury during this time period. The brightest object in the western sky during the evening is Sirius, the brightest star in the night sky.

In the morning sky, Jupiter is pulling farther and farther away from the sun, rising two hours before the sun on June 1st and almost four hours by the end of the month. Much fainter Mars is far to Jupiter's lower left throughout the month. And if you wait an hour before sunrise, you will be able to see brilliant Venus rise in the morning twilight.

Astronomy open houses at the ETSU Observatory and planetarium shows in the newly refurbished ETSU Planetarium (see http://www.etsu.edu/physics/plntrm/planetarium.html) are on hiatus during the summer months. They will resume this upcoming September.

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