

The Night Sky

Venus Dominates the Evening Sky

Venus is still the brightest 'point-like' object in the evening sky. On the evening of June 2nd, Venus and the two brightest stars in Gemini, Pollux and Castor, form an equidistant straight line. If you look just to the upper left of Venus, you'll see the red planet Mars. If you train binoculars on Mars, you will see it nestled in M44, the Beehive Star Cluster. It should make a spectacular sight! On the following night, June 3rd, watch the Full Moon rise next to the red supergiant star Antares in the constellation of Scorpius. If you have a clear southeast horizon, you should be able to spot the Moon rising in the southeast shortly after the Sun sets. However, you will have to wait until hour after sunset for the sky to be dark enough to see Antares.

On the nights of June 21st through the 23rd, watch the waxing crescent Moon trek past Venus, Mars, and Regulus, the brightest star in Leo. On the summer solstice, June 21st, the Moon, Venus, and Mars form a right triangle.

Turning now to the morning sky, from June 13th through the 15th, watch the waning crescent Moon flow past Jupiter in the eastern sky. The King of the Planets and the Moon will be the closest together on the morning of the 14th above the eastern horizon. Looking through binoculars, you should be able to see both Jupiter and the Moon in the same field of view. If you look closely at Jupiter, you should be able to spot a few of its four bright moons through binoculars as well. During this same stretch of days, turn your gaze towards the east-northeastern horizon to see if you can spot Mercury rising one hour before sunrise.

The ringed-planet Saturn is also visible in the morning sky, residing in the southern sky. Saturn rises 5 hours before the Sun and is currently in the constellation of Aquarius. Since the stars of Aquarius are rather dim compared to the bright planets, Saturn will be the brightest object in that part of the sky.

June's Full Moon will occur at 11:42 p.m. EDT on June 3rd. That is 2 days prior to the Moon being at perigee, so it's not quite a 'supermoon', but it will appear bigger and brighter than normal. Native Americans often referred to the June Full Moon the Full Strawberry Moon since strawberry's are ready for harvesting in the northern states during this month.

The Sun reaches the summer solstice at 10:58 a.m. EDT on June 21st, ushering in the summer season. We experience more daylight time on this day than any other throughout the year in the Northern Hemisphere since the Sun is as far north of the celestial equator as it can get on the sky.

The ETSU Powell Observatory open houses are on hiatus until September. Later this summer, the 2023-2024 schedule for our Astronomy open houses can be found on the web at <https://www.etsu.edu/cas/physics/observatory/starparty.php>.

The ETSU Planetarium Shows are also on hiatus during the summer months. Please check the Planetarium web page at <https://www.etsu.edu/cas/physics/outreach/planetarium.php> for further information

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