

The Night Sky

Jupiter Returns to the Morning Sky

The “King of the Planets,” mighty Jupiter returns to the morning sky early this upcoming month after passing behind the Sun on May 18th. The earliest you should be able spot brilliant Jupiter in the morning twilight will be the morning of June 7th. On this date, it will rise 45 minutes before the Sun above the northeastern horizon.

There is not a lot going on in the evening sky this month except for various stellar encounters with the Moon. From June 7th through the 9th, you can watch the waxing crescent Moon slide below Gemini’s two brightest stars, Castor followed by Pollux. This grouping will appear low in the west-northwestern sky just as twilight is fading. Over the next two weeks, the waxing Moon will have three more close encounters with bright stars. On the 11th, it is roughly 2½ degrees to the upper right of Leo’s brightest star Regulus. Then on June 16th, the waxing gibbous Moon is 4 degrees left of Virgo’s brightest star, Spica. Finally on the 19th, a nearly full Moon will be located just to the upper right of the red supergiant star Antares, the brightest star in the constellation of Scorpius.

The ringed-planet Saturn rises shortly after midnight at midmonth. Look to the southeast at this time to see Saturn rising. Saturn will be the brightest “star” in this part of the sky. Saturn’s rings are currently nearly “edge-on,” so this summer will be the time to spot the rings before they go edge-on next year.

On June 30th, sharp-eyed observers might be able to spot the innermost planet Mercury forming a straight line with Pollux and Castor in the evening sky (Mercury will be the one on the left), just above the west-northwest horizon 30 minutes after sunset.

The longest day of the year in the northern hemisphere occurs on June 20th. At 4:51 p.m. EDT, the Sun will be located at the summer solstice on the celestial sphere. This marks the beginning of the summer season.

The Moon will reach full phase the day after the summer solstice on June 21st at 9:08 p.m. EDT. The June full Moon is often called the Full Strawberry Moon since strawberries are harvested in this month.

The ETSU Powell Observatory open houses and the monthly planetarium shows are on hiatus until September. Later this summer, the 2024-2025 schedule for our Astronomy open houses can be found on the web at <https://www.etsu.edu/cas/physics/observatory/starparty.php>, and planetarium shows posted at <https://www.etsu.edu/cas/physics/outreach/planetarium.php>.

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