

# The Night Sky

## Jupiter Leaves the Evening Sky

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As compared to April 2024, the month of May will be relatively quiet “astronomically speaking.” For the first few days of May, you might be able to catch Jupiter, just sitting above the west-northwest horizon 30 minutes after sunset. This giant planet is drifting slowly towards the Sun and will be lost in the solar glare by the end of the first week of the month. It reaches conjunction with the Sun on May 18<sup>th</sup>. The “King of the Planets” will return to the morning sky on June 7<sup>th</sup> after passing behind the Sun.

The morning sky is the place to be to view most of the naked-eye planets during the month. In the early morning hours from May 3<sup>rd</sup> through the 6<sup>th</sup>, watch the waning crescent Moon pass the ringed planet Saturn, followed by the red planet Mars, then skirting past Mercury, sitting low above the east-southeastern horizon 30 minutes before sunrise. You’ll likely need binoculars to spot Mercury in the bright morning twilight. Over the next week, Mercury climbs a little higher in the sky and brightens, however, you will likely still need binoculars to spot our innermost planet when it reaches greatest elongation from the Sun on the 9<sup>th</sup>.

On the last day of the month, a close conjunction between the Moon and Saturn will take place. At 4 a.m. EDT on May 31<sup>st</sup>, Saturn will be less than a degree of arc above the Moon. This should prove to be an interesting sight!

The Moon will reach full phase at 9:53 a.m. EDT on May 23<sup>rd</sup>. Native Americans would often call the May Full Moon as the Full Flower Moon since many different types of flowers bloom during this month.

The ETSU Powell Observatory open houses 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>.

There will be a planetarium show on Thursday, May 9<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 p.m. at the ETSU Planetarium in Hutcheson Hall. A location map of the Planetarium on the ETSU campus can be found on the web at <https://www.etsu.edu/cas/physics/outreach/planetarium.php> for further information.

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This month’s Night Sky was written by Dr. Donald G. Luttermoser, Chair of the Department of Physics and Astronomy at ETSU. He can be reached at [lutter@etsu.edu](mailto:lutter@etsu.edu). Any students wishing to pursue a career in Physics or Astronomy are encouraged to contact him at this email address. Astronomy-related information for the public, including a link to the ETSU Powell Observatory,

can be found at <http://www.etsu.edu/cas/physics/> by selecting the Public Outreach pull down menu on the lower-left side of this web page.