Planets at dusk: Saturn, mag. +0.6 at midmonth, is high in S to WSW at dusk, **in a rare and striking, long-lasting close pair with 1.4-mag. Regulus.** See May 3, 11-13, 31. Closest approach, 2.2° apart on May 3, is termed a ***quasi-conjunction,*** an approach within 5° without an actual conjunction in Right Ascension or in celestial longitude. (Saturn already passed conjunction with Regulus, within 0.9° N of star, in early Sept. 2007.) The next occasion Saturn will appear near Regulus will be in 2036-37, in a triple conjunction. **Mars,** fading from +1.2 to +1.5, moves from WSW into W at dusk. Going eastward in Cancer, Mars passes through Beehive cluster and is **closing in on Saturn.** See May 4, 8-10, 11-13, 22, 24, 25, 31. **Mercury** has a **very favorable appearance** low in WNW from late April until mid-May, shining at mag. –1 on Apr. 29, mag. zero on May 10, +1 on May 18, then fades sharply thereafter. See May 1, 2, 5, 6-7, 13, 14, 15, 18. **Span of three evening planets, Mercury-Mars-Saturn:** See May 3, 14, 19. **Moon goes past all three during May 6-12.**

Late night: Jupiter rises in SE over 5 hours after sunset on May 1, to within 3 hours after sunset at month's end. See Night of Fri. May 23. **Jupiter-Saturn simultaneously:** See May 3. **Mars-Saturn-Jupiter simultaneously** (getting easier, and shifting earlier in night): See May 13, 30.

Planet at dawn: Jupiter, of mag. –2.5 at midmonth, is in southern sky at dawn. In eastern Sagittarius, Jupiter begins retrograde on May 9. See May 9, 20-24.

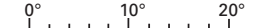
Try for **opposing crescent Moons on consecutive days:** On **Sunday May 4,** about 40 min. before sunrise, look for the thin old crescent Moon very low, 15°-20° N of E. The Moon is about 26-27 hours before New for E Coast, 24 hours before New for West. **Much more difficult is the very young crescent on the following day:** On **Monday May 5,** about 25-30 min. after sunset, try for a hairline thin Moon very low in WNW, ~13° lower right of Mercury. Age is a near-record 12 hours for E Coast (extremely difficult), 15-16 hours W Coast, 17 hours Hawaii. **Binoculars** will aid for both sightings, especially for the extremely young crescent on May 5.

Planetarium business office:
(517) 355-4676
Night Sky Notes on World Wide Web:
http://www.pa.msu.edu/abrams/nightskynotes/

SKY CALENDAR MAY 2008

An aid to enjoying the changing sky

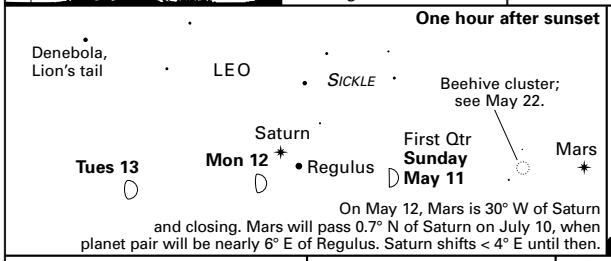
Use this scale to measure angular distances between objects on diagrams below.



SUNDAY

Sunday May 4, 35 min before sunrise: Moon ~ 26-27 hrs before New from E Coast, 24 hrs before from West.

One hour after sunset



On May 12, Mars is 30° W of Saturn and closing. Mars will pass 0.7° N of Saturn on July 10, when planet pair will be nearly 6° E of Regulus. Saturn shifts < 4° E until then.

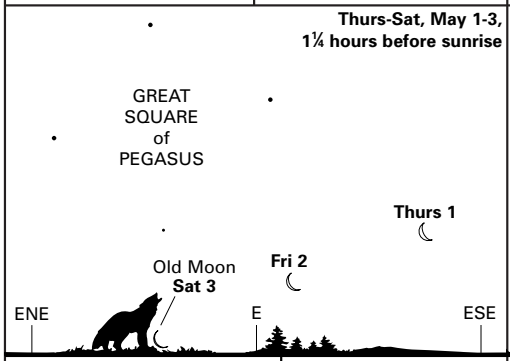
Sunday May 18: Last day to see Sun & Moon simultaneously just before sunset. This week, Mercury fades sharply, from mag +1 to +2, and passes 4.4° LL of Bull's N horn May 20-22.

Mon May 19: Full **"Blue" Moon** (3rd Full Moon of the season) rises around sunset in FL, soon after elsewhere in U.S. **Next Blue Moon:** Nov. 21, 2010. **Rest of Mercury's apparition:** Me-Ma-Sa span 72° to 71°.

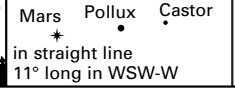
Sunday May 25, nightfall
Mars passes 1.5° N of 4th-mag Delta Cnc, Asellus Australis, S donkey. Binoculars.

MONDAY

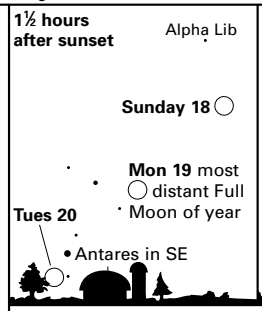
Thurs-Sat, May 1-3, 1¼ hours before sunrise



Sunday May 4, one hour after sunset

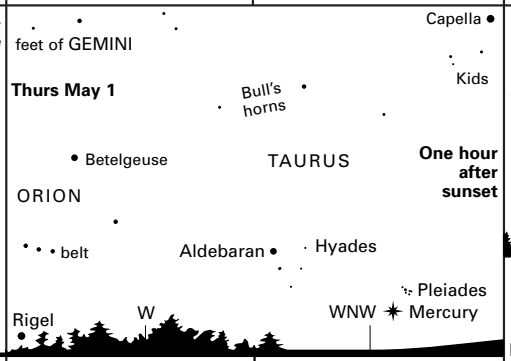


1½ hours after sunset



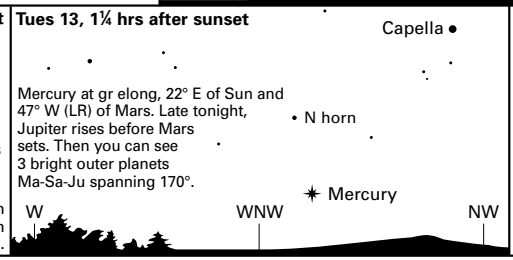
Mon May 26, predawn:
Neptune (mag 8) begins retrograde 2.3° N of 2.8-mag. Delta Capricorni and between the 5th-mag stars 41 and Mu Cap.

TUESDAY

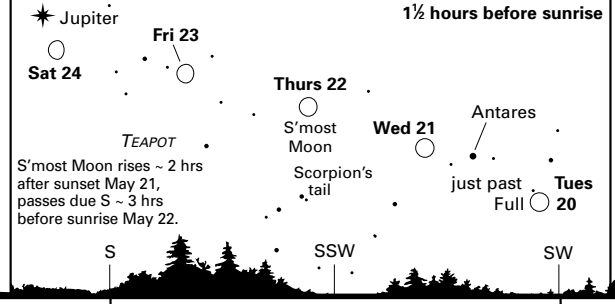


Monday May 5
8:18 a.m. EDT.
Perigee, 222,309 miles from Earth, 11 p.m. EDT.
Very young Moon: See next.

One hour after sunset



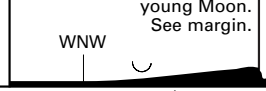
1½ hours before sunrise



Tues May 27
Last Quarter 10:57 p.m. EDT.
Moon isn't up then, but by sunrise on Wed 28, Moon is 86° W of Sun and is just under half full.
In predawn on Thurs 29, Moon is 16° S of Great Square of Pegasus, 3° N of 6th-mag Uranus, and just S of Circlet of Pisces.

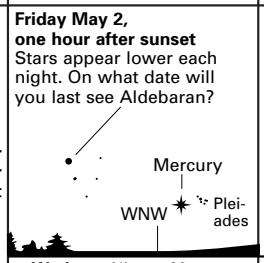
WEDNESDAY

May 5, 30 min after sunset Try for very young Moon. See margin.



THURSDAY

Friday May 2, one hour after sunset
Stars appear lower each night. On what date will you last see Aldebaran?



Wed 7 N'most Moon near Bull's horn

One hour after sunset
Moon easy these evenings

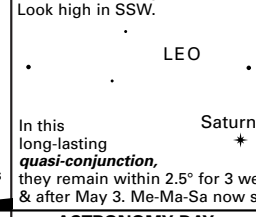
Tues May 6

Wed May 14 at dusk

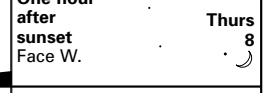
Mercury-Mars-Saturn span 75°.

FRIDAY

Sat May 3, one hour after sunset
Saturn ends retrograde 2.2° from Regulus. Look high in SSW.



ASTRONOMY DAY
Sat 10 near Beehive



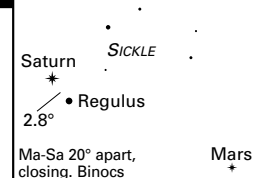
One hour after sunset Face W.

Thurs 8

Thursday May 15 at dusk

Mercury stays 46° W (LR) of Mars May 15-22, but fades from mag +0.5 to +1.7. Spica ~ 12° lower left of Moon this evening.

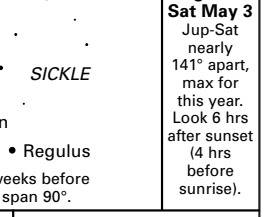
Sat May 31, 1½ hours after sunset, WSW to W



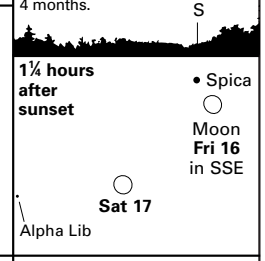
Fri May 30
About 3½ hours after sunset, before Mars sets, all three bright outer planets, Mars-Saturn-Jupiter, span 160°. From lat 40° N, Mars and Jupiter are then both 6° above horizon, in nearly opposite directions.

SATURDAY

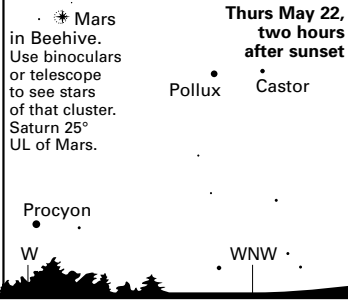
Late night of Sat May 3
Jup-Sat nearly 141° apart, max for this year. Look 6 hrs after sunset (4 hrs before sunrise).



1¼ hours after sunset



Thurs May 22, two hours after sunset



Regulus 2.5° LR of Saturn this weekend.
Night of Fri May 23, four hours after sunset: Rising Moon near Jupiter.
May 24, nightfall: Mars between Delta & Gamma Cancri, the "Aselli", feeding from the Manger, or Praesepe, the Beehive Cluster.

Robert C. Victor, Patti Toivonen
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