

Earth now at greatest distance from the sun

IN JULY the earth is at its farthest from the sun for the entire year.

The morning planets this month are Mercury, Venus and Jupiter. Mars and Saturn are visible after sunset and can be observed all night.

THE AMOUNT of sunlight we receive decreases by 45 minutes in July.

On July 1, sunrise is at 5:59 a.m. and sunset is at 9:12 p.m. (all times are Eastern Daylight Time) for a possible 15 hours and 13 minutes of sunshine. On July 31 the sun rises at 6:24 a.m. and sets at 8:52 p.m. for a possible 14 hours and 28 minutes of sun.

On the morning of July 1, about 45 minutes before sunrise, face the northeast and you will have no trouble seeing Jupiter and Venus. Jupiter is the bright looking "star" about 20 degrees above the horizon.

To the north (left) of Jupiter is the Pleiades (Plee a dees) star cluster, which looks like a tiny "dipper." The Pleiades marks the shoulder of Taurus the bull. Draw an imaginary line straight down to the horizon from the Pleiades and you'll pass directly through a reddish colored star. This is Aldebaran (al DEE a ran) the "eye" of Taurus.

To the north (left) of Aldebaran, looking like another brilliant star, is Venus. Draw another imaginary line, this time from Aldebaran through Venus, and you'll come to the planet



skywatch
Raymond E. Bullock

Mercury. Mercury is about as far below and to the left of Venus as Aldebaran is above and to Venus' right. Mercury is only a few degrees above the horizon and difficult to see.

ON JULY 4, Venus ends its retrograde (backward) motion. It has been moving westward through the stars, getting closer to Aldebaran. Venus will be only 4.5 degrees from Aldebaran on the morning of July 4. Now Venus is at the point of its orbit around the sun where it will appear to change direction and start moving eastward, moving farther from Aldebaran.

Planets do not go forward and backward. The apparent change in direction is an optical illusion caused by the motion of the planet and the motion of the earth.

Mars will be easy to identify on the morning of July 5. It is the bright "star" five degrees below the moon at 3 a.m. On the following morning the moon is at last quarter phase and is to the left of Mars.

Also on July 5, the earth is at aphelion — its farthest point from the sun for the entire year. Earth is 152,099,900 kilometers (94,509,937

miles) from the sun.

You might expect our weather to be its coldest when we are farthest from the sun and hottest when we are nearest. Obviously our distance does not govern the seasons or temperatures; the tilt of the earth is the deciding factor. The northern hemisphere of our planet tilts toward the sun at this time of the year and we have summer.

MERCURY is at maximum elongation (greatest apparent distance) from the sun on the morning of the 6th. It is 21 degrees west (right) of the sun but still a difficult object to see in the morning sky.

The moon forms a nice triangle with Jupiter and the Pleiades on the morning of July 9. Look in the east and you'll see Jupiter directly below the moon.

Try to find Mercury by drawing a line from Aldebaran through Venus again. On the next morning the moon is 10 degrees above Venus. On the 11th the moon is 10 degrees above Mercury.

New Moon is at 5:53 p.m. on July 13. The moon is between the earth and the sun and is not visible.

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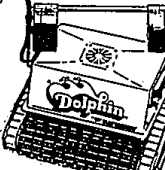
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