

Two sets of planets 'meet' during July

This month there will be two conjunctions ("meetings") of planets in the sky. Mercury will appear to pass Jupiter and Venus will appear to pass Mars. In addition, Earth is farthest from the sun in July and there will be a meteor shower, albeit a weak one.

The amount of sunlight we receive decreases by 45 minutes this month. On July 1, sunrise is at 5:59 a.m. and sunset is at 9:12 p.m.; allowing for a possible 15 hours and 13 minutes of daylight. On July 31 these times are 6:24 a.m. and 8:52 p.m., for a possible 14 hours and 28 minutes of sun.

The evening planets this month are Venus, Mars and Saturn. Mercury and Jupiter are in the predawn sky.

You might be able to glimpse Mercury early in July. Face toward the east-northeastern horizon about 45 minutes before sunrise, and locate the waning ("fading") crescent

moon. Mercury will be six degrees below the moon, and only three degrees above the horizon. Obviously an unobstructed view of the horizon will be necessary to see Mercury. About two degrees to the north (left) of Mercury is Jupiter.

Jupiter also will be difficult to see. It's only two degrees above the horizon. By the end of the month, Jupiter will be much higher in the morning sky and very easy to see; it's only two degrees above the horizon. By the end of the month Jupiter will be much higher in the morning sky and very easy to see, but Mercury will be long gone.

MERCURY PASSES 0.8 degrees south of (below) Jupiter on the morning of the 2nd. This is called a conjunction, or grouping, of planets. While the two objects may look like they are side by side, they are really millions of miles apart. The last con-

junction between Mercury and Jupiter occurred last year in April. Their next conjunction occurs on July 7, 1990.

Also on July 2, Saturn is at opposition. It will be opposite the sun as seen from the earth. Saturn will rise in the southeast as the sun sets in the northwest, be visible all night, and set in the southwest as the sun rises in the northeast.

New Moon occurs at 12:59 a.m. on July 3. The moon is located between the earth and the sun. This could also be considered a conjunction between the sun and the moon, although the moon is not visible.

Earth is at aphelion on July 4. Aphelion is derived from two Greek words: apo, which means "away from" and helios, the Greek name



skywatch

Raymond E. Bullock

for the sun. Our distance is 152,000,000 km (about 94,500,000 miles) from the sun.

EARTH'S ORBIT around the sun is not a circle. It is elliptical (oval). In July, when we have warm weather, we are farthest from the sun. We are actually closest to the sun in January. Our distance to the sun does not determine our seasons. It is the direction of the tilt of the earth's

poles, with respect to the sun, that governs the seasons.

Look for the waxing ("growing") crescent moon on the evening of the 4th. Face west-northwest 45 minutes after sunset. The bright "star" immediately to the left of the upper cusp (point of the crescent) is Venus. Extend a line from the cusp through Venus and you'll come to the red planet, Mars. Continue the line in the

same direction and you'll intersect Regulus (REG u lus), the "Heart" of Leo (the lion). Watch as Venus passes both Mars and Regulus during the month.

On July 5, the moon has passed Mars and is located nearly midway between Venus and Regulus. On the next night the moon is directly in the left of Regulus.

On July 7 notice how much the distance between Venus and Mars has decreased in just three days.

Raymond Bullock is the former coordinator of the planetarium and observatory at Cranbrook Institute of Science. He now works for Image Engineering Corp., a company specializing in laser displays and effects.

Few roads barred over July 4th

The Oakland County Road Commission, in an effort to keep county roads as barrier free as possible on summer weekends and holidays, has instructed that all possible construction and road maintenance barricades to free-moving traffic be removed for the duration of the July 4 holiday weekend.

Road maintenance crews, working four 10-hour days weekly, will begin removing all possible barriers to traffic on Thursday, June 29, according to road commission officials. With little more than emergency and minimum normal maintenance anticipated for Monday, July 3, drivers should have no problem travel-

ing most Oakland County roads during the holiday weekend, they said.

Because of the extensive and constant presence of rain this spring, most construction projects employing independent contractors will have work activity Monday, July 3. Projects of this nature, however, normally require work over a much

longer period than road maintenance. It is likely that these construction areas would have to be barricaded for driver safety no matter what the work conditions.

All normal road maintenance on the Oakland County road system will resume 6:30 a.m., Wednesday, July 5.

PARKINSON'S PATIENTS NEEDED FOR STUDY

Patients who have Parkinson's Disease are invited to participate in an upcoming study of a new form of Sinemet (L-DOPA), the standard medication for this disorder. The new drug, Sinemet CR (controlled release), will be used to learn if better responses can be achieved with up to 5 years of treatment. Patients who have used Sinemet are not eligible for the study.

Regular outpatient visits, medications and laboratory testing in conjunction with the study are free of charge.

Parkinson's Disease is characterized by slowness of movement, decreased dexterity, tremors and balance problems.

For more information about the study, call Dr. Peter LeWitt at 493-5354.

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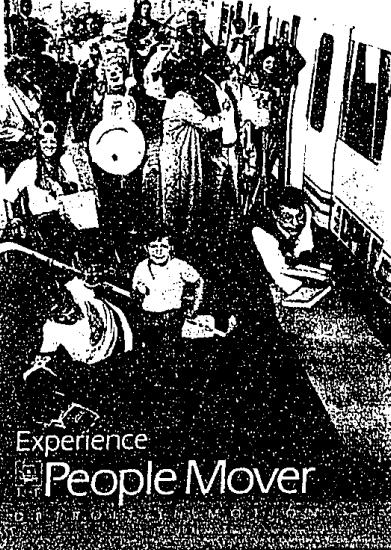
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