

Planet Saturn just seems to orbit backwards

By Raymond Bullock
special writer

FACE south-southwest about 45 minutes before sunrise on April 6, and you'll see a bright orange-red star to the south (left) of the moon. This star is Antares (an **TAU** ces), the heart of Scorpius the scorpion.

Watch the motion of the moon during the next four mornings as it drifts through Scorpius, Sagittarius and into Capricornus.

Saturn, in Sagittarius, is six degrees north of (above) the moon on the morning of the 8th. The moon is just above the "spout" of the "teapot" that marks Sagittarius.

Saturn has slowly been drifting eastward through the constellation of Sagittarius all year. On the 10th it is stationary and begins retrograde (backward) motion.

During the next four months it will drift westward through Sagittarius, as if retracing its path.

PLANETS DON'T really stop and then orbit backwards. Retrograde motion is an optical illusion.

Earth orbits the sun faster than Saturn. As the earth's orbit carries it between the sun and Saturn, we overtake the slower moving planet. Saturn merely appears to move backward.

Once we are past the illusion point, Saturn will appear to go forward again.

THE MOON is at last quarter phase on April 9. On the 10th look for Mars, above and to the left of the moon.

Look back at Antares, in the south-southwest, and compare it with Mars. Antares means "rival of Mars." Do you think Antares rivals Mars in brightness and color?

Venus forms a large triangle with the Pleiades and Aldebaran (al DEB a ran), the "eye" of Taurus, on the evening of the 17th. Face west and you'll easily see brilliant Venus. To the left of Venus is Aldebaran.

Below and to the right of Venus is the Pleiades. (Notice how far Venus has moved from the Pleiades in just 12 days.)

Below the Pleiades, close to the horizon, is Jupiter. As Jupiter gets closer to the sun it will become more difficult to see. Can you still find it by week's end?

NEW MOON is at 8 a.m. April 15. The moon is between the earth and the sun and is not visible.

Notice the Venus-Aldebaran-Pleiades triangle again on the evening of the 17th. Below the Pleiades is the one-day old crescent moon. On the next night the crescent moon is directly over the Pleiades and will make a beautiful sight in binoculars.

Tuesday, April 19, will be your chance to locate Venus in the daytime sky, thanks to the moon. Look

skywatch

for the moon, high in the west, shortly before sunset. Immediately to the left of the moon will be Venus. If you have trouble seeing Venus with your naked eye, use binoculars. Once you find it with binoculars, try spotting it without.

If you are really ambitious, keep checking on the moon and Venus every 30 minutes and not how rapidly

ly the moon's position changes with respect to Venus.

Mercury is at superior conjunction on the 20th. It is located behind the sun, as seen from the earth, and is not visible. With luck you might spot Mercury at the very end of the month.

The moon forms another triangle with the stars Castor and Pollux on the evening of the 21st. Castor is above the moon; Pollux is to the left of Castor. These two stars mark the "heads" of Gemini the twins. On the following evening, the moon is below and to the left of Pollux.

THE LYRID (LYE rid) meteor shower reaches its peak on the evening and morning of the 21st and 22nd.

This is a fairly weak meteor shower; an average of only 15 meteors ("falling stars") are seen each hour. The Lyrid shower is named for the constellation Lyra, from which the meteors appear to radiate.

Lyra is rising in the northeast around 9 p.m. and is overhead at 6 a.m. The moon sets around 10 p.m. on the 21st, which will help darken the sky.

What meteor activity there is

should begin to pick up after 11 p.m. and last through dawn on the 22nd. You do not need a telescope to observe meteors. Just look up and be very patient.

First quarter moon occurs on April 23. The moon is one-quarter of its way around the earth.

THE MOON is directly above the star Regulus (REG a Jus) on the evening of the 24th. Regulus is the "heart" of Leo the lion.

On the 29th the moon is approaching Spica for the second time this month. How does its position on the 29th compare with its position back

on April 2? On the 30th the moon is below Spica.

Also on the 30th, 45 minutes after sunset, find Venus in the west northwest. Draw an imaginary line from Venus straight down toward the horizon and you'll see Aldebaran. Look to the north (right) of Aldebaran for the Pleiades. (Use binoculars if necessary.)

Directly below the Pleiades, just above the horizon is Mercury. Officially an "evening planet" now, Mercury will be very difficult to see. It will become easier to see during May.

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OCC chefs dominate food show

Culinary arts students, apprentices and graduates of Oakland Community College's food service program walked away with 45 of 87 possible awards in the hospitality industry's recent Culinary Arts Salon.

OCC people took the show's highest honors, best of show and best pastry. In the professional category, OCC graduates took the best of show, best pastry and most original awards.

The salon and judging were March 27 on OCC's Orchard Ridge Campus in Farmington Hills. Sponsor was the Michigan Restaurant Association and Michigan Chefs de Cuisine. The event had previously been held at Detroit's Cobo Hall.

IN THE STUDENT category, James Bair Jr. of Plymouth received a gold medal and took the best of show award for his seafood platter.

In the professional class, Michael W. Connelly of Warren was awarded best of show and a gold medal, and Kevin Paulina of Novi won the best pastry award.

All seven apprentice category medals went to OCC students. Apprentice silver medal winner was Douglas Briggs of Troy.

In the student category, gold medal winners included Patricia Christiansen of Livonia and Barbara Zapinski of Southfield.

Silver medalists in the student category were Mike Drouillard of Livonia; Brian Granowicz of Bloomfield Hills; Tom Loniewski of Farmington Hills; Ken Nulph of Livonia; David Pitek of Farmington Hills; and John Wiegand of Farmington Hills.

Bronze medal student award winners included Matthew Barkach of Farmington Hills; John Felcher of Farmington Hills; Beth Good of Livonia; Nichole Jolley of Farmington Hills; Ellie Kates of Troy; Candace Marotto of Southfield; Dane Marshall of Rochester; Jody Pentil of Farmington Hills; Janis Squillac of Farmington Hills.

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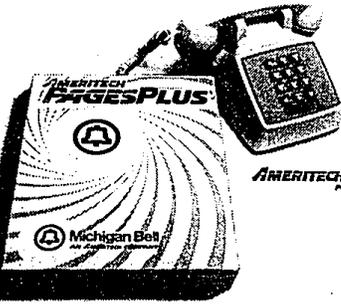
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