

Three planets visible

by James Stokley

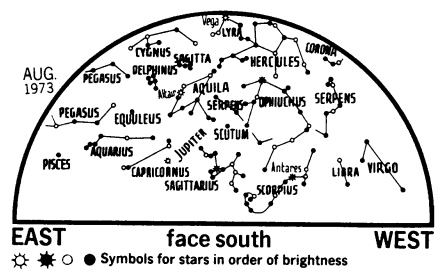
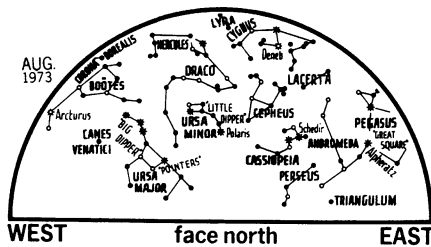
Venus, Jupiter and Mars are now visible in the August evening sky. Before twilight fades Venus can be seen low in the west. It sets less than an hour and a half after the sun. In the south, in Capricornus, stands Jupiter, visible all night. It is a little more than a third as bright as Venus. Mars rises in the east about midnight. Although it is about a quarter as bright as Jupiter, it still surpasses its stellar neighbors. By the end of the month it will rise about 10 p.m. local daylight saving time.

Only Jupiter appears on the accompanying maps, which show the sky as it appears about 11 p.m., local DST, on Aug. 1; an hour earlier on the 15th and two hours earlier as the month closes.

Stretched across the southern sky on August evenings are seven of the twelve constellations that form the zodiac—the background of the moon and planets as they move across the sky. Pisces, the fishes, where Mars appears, is toward the east. Next, to the right, is Aquarius, the water carrier, represented on the old star maps as a man emptying a jar of water. Very curiously, they showed the stream flowing into the mouth of one of the fishes.

Then comes Capricornus, where Jupiter stands. Actually, it is one of the faintest of the zodiacal groups. This was represented as a sea goat—a creature with the head and body of a goat and the tail of a fish. It is a very ancient figure, for it was shown the same way on Babylonian boundary stones—among the oldest of records from the past.

Farther right is Sagittarius, the archer. He is a centaur, with the head and shoulders of a man and the body of a horse, about to shoot an arrow to the right. Scorpius, the scorpion, comes next. This is really the finest constellation of the zodiac, but we can't see it



to full advantage from northern countries. In the Southern Hemisphere, where it passes directly overhead, it makes a magnificent display.

Libra, the scales, are next, and they have a curious history. These stars were originally the claws of the scorpion but in ancient times they were made to form a pair of scales. Farther right, in the west, you will see the virgin, Virgo. It contains a first-magnitude star called Spica, which sets before the times for which the August maps are drawn.

Venus, visible in the west in the early evening, is in Leo, the lion, but it sets before the stars become visible. By the end of August it will have moved into Virgo.

More of the zodiac appears later at night. Next to Pisces is Aries, the ram. This is another rather inconspicuous group, and none of its stars are shown.

By 3 a.m. you can see them, as well as the next constellation, Taurus, the bull.

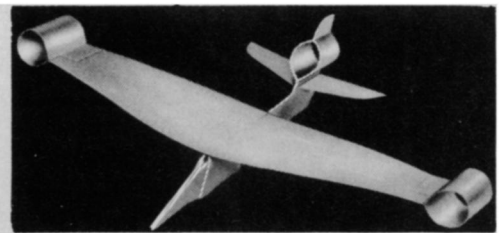
Gemini, the twins, where Saturn now stands, follow Taurus. This group is not prominent at present for it rises at dawn. Mercury, when visible about the eighth, is in this direction. Finally comes Cancer, the crab. You will not be able to see it in August, however, for the sun is in this part of the sky.

One way to remember the constellations of the zodiac, in their usual order from west to east, is an old verse. It was written by the hymn writer Isaac Watts (1674-1748), and it goes like this:

*The Ram, the Bull, the heavenly Twins
And next the Crab, the Lion shines,
The Virgin and the Scales.
The Scorpion, Archer and Sea-Goat,
The Man that holds the Water-pot,
And Fish with glittering tails.*

CELESTIAL TIMETABLE		
Aug.	EDT	
5	6:27 pm	Moon in first quarter
8	2:00 pm	Mercury farthest west of sun
9	6:00 am	Moon farthest; distance 251,700 miles
12	5:00 pm	Moon passes north of Jupiter
13	10:17 pm	Full moon
19	3:00 pm	Moon passes north of Mars
21	6:22 am	Moon in last quarter
23	4:00 pm	Moon passes north of Saturn
25	3:00 am	Moon nearest; distance 227,000 miles
27	11:25 pm	New moon
31	1:00 am	Moon passes south of Venus

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