

By Vernon Whetstone

Amateur Astronomer

Well, I am glad that is out of the way. What, you ask? Daylight Savings Time of course.

It really isn't saving daylight you know, there is still just as much as there was before, it is just shifted around. When the clock is shifted forward (the "spring ahead" thing), sunrise and sunset become an hour later hence supposedly giving more light in the evening hours.

But for astronomers, more light means less dark and therefore shorter hours available for viewing which is not a good thing.

For example, sunset today is at about 4:35 p.m., and sunrise is at about 6:24 a.m. An hour after sunset becomes 5:35 p.m. and an hour before sunrise becomes 5:24 a.m., which is far better than the 4:24 a.m. for sunrise it would have been last week.

Anyway, to the sky. The planet Jupiter and the moon are making another of their what has become monthly meetings tonight (Wednesday). Look anytime beginning about a half-hour after sunset in the east.

While you are out there bring your binoculars and swing your view to the southwest. If you have a clear, flat horizon look for very bright Venus the second planet out from the Sun.

In the same field of view you should be able to find the first planet out from the Sun, Mercury, and below it the star Antares, the brightest star in Scorpius. Scorpius is one of our favorite summer constellations which has now fled the sky for warmer climates.

Tomorrow (Thursday) look in the east about an hour before sunrise (see, about 5:30 a.m., that wasn't so bad after all was it) for another planet/star visitation. This time it is Saturn returning to the sky from its trip around the far side of the Sun.

It will be paired up with its old friend Spica, the brightest star in Virgo, the Maiden. Since Saturn's orbit time around the Sun is so slow it will be spending some time near the bright star.

Since you are already out, look almost overhead for another planetary joining. This time Mars is near Regulus, the Heart of Leo, the Lion.

If you would spend some time outside each week at about the same time and observe all of the planets near their stars you will see why planets are called planets. The term is from the Greek which means, "wandering star." They didn't understand why some stars seemed to move so they put them in a separate category.

SKY WATCH: Full moon tomorrow, Thursday, Nov. 10. If the falling temperatures haven't given you a clue, this will. Orion, the King of the winter stars is rising over the eastern horizon at about 10:30 p.m. these evenings. Time to air out the long johns and pull out the winter coats.

Friday evening, Nov. 11, take a quick run outside at about 8pm for a glance to the east. The full moon will be standing between bright Aldebaran, the brightest star in Taurus, the Bull, and the star cluster Pleiades. Binoculars will be needed to find the tiny star group because the brightness of the moon will almost wash them out for viewing.

NEXT WEEK: More astronomical blathering.