

### The skies are boring right now

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To paraphrase Garrison Keillor from *The Prairie Home Companion*, “There is not much news from the sky this week.

Oh, there are some events that are worth going outside to look for, but after the recent partial lunar eclipse and the transit of Venus across the Sun, there is nothing that exciting in the offing.

First up, tonight there will be a triple-conjunction involving a first quarter moon, the star Spica, and the planet Saturn.

The threesome will be about halfway up the sky from the southwest horizon and will be visible about an hour after sunset. Look for Spica and Saturn above the half-lit moon. The planet Mars will be looking in at the party from about 25 degrees to the right of the moon.

On Friday, June 29, the moon has moved on eastward from Virgo into another zodiacal constellation, Libra, the Scales.

In fact, the moon will be just below the only two stars of Libra that are truly visible, Zubeneshamali, and Zubenelgenubi.

Now, while those two names are real tongue twisters, in Arabic they mean the Northern Claw, and the Southern Claw.

Both stars used to be part of Scorpius, the Scorpion representing his claws before celestial map makers decided to insert another zodiac constellation in there. Now, you can take your friends outside and show them the two stars just above the moon and amaze them with your knowledge.

Saturn and Spica will be observing this little meeting from away off to the right. Saturn is the upper bright object. If you look closely, you will notice that it is not twinkling like its lower neighbor, Spica. That is because planets don't twinkle, only stars do that.

On Saturday, June 30, the moon has moved again further east into another zodiacal constellation, Scorpius, the Scorpion. It will be right in the middle of the three stars forming the head and just above and slightly right of Antares, the red, glowing heart of the beast.

Below and right of the moon, between Scorpius and its neighbor, Sagittarius, is a wonderful hunting ground for nebula and star clusters. However, the moon will be just a few days from being full so it may put too much light in the area.

But you will never know until you look. Binoculars will be handy in this hunting ground.

This area, just above the spout of the “Tea Pot” of Sagittarius is the location of the center of the Milky Way so there will be a lot there to look for. If you want directions, just follow the “steam” out of the teapot, that is the band of the Milky Way.

If the moon does wash out too much of the sky, wait a few days, it will be gone and the “celestial goodies” will be in full view again.

SKY WATCH: Full moon, July 3. Wednesday, July 4, is the day Earth reaches the farthest point

in its orbit away from the Sun. Yes, we are further away from the Sun than we will be all year. Then why is it so hot?

It still has to do with that pesky 23 and one-half degree tilt of Earth on its axis. We are now tilted toward the Sun, which means we are getting more direct sunlight than at any other time of the year. Except for our friends south of the equator, they are experiencing winter since they are tilted away from the Sun. I was chatting on-line with an astronomical friend from Australia last week. She was complaining because it was just above freezing. I told her it has been above 100 degrees for several days here. Then I asked if she wanted to trade.