

Jupiter now prominent

by James Stokley

Jupiter, the only planet visible all evening in March, shines so brightly in the southeast that you can hardly miss it.

Its position, in the constellation of Leo, the lion, is shown on the accompanying maps. These depict the sky as it looks about 10:00 p.m., local time, on March 1, an hour earlier at the middle of the month and two hours earlier at the end.

Although not shown on the maps because they set before these times, Mars and Saturn also are visible early in the evening at the beginning of the month. They'll be close together, because Mars passes Saturn on the night of March 3. Both planets, in Pisces, the fishes, are quite faint because they are now far from earth. By the end of March, Sat-

urn, setting with the sun, will no longer be visible. Mars will remain in the evening sky for a few months longer.

Brightest star of the March evening is Sirius, low in the south, in Canis major, the greater dog. The lesser dog, Canis Minor, containing Procyon, is higher. To the right of these figures stands Orion, the warrior, with two stars of the first magnitude: Betelgeuse, above, and Rigel, below. A row of three fainter stars between them forms Orion's belt.

Directly west, at the times for which the maps are drawn, stands Taurus, the bull. Red Aldebaran marks his eye. Above Taurus are Gemini, the twins. Two stars are marked: first magnitude Pollux and second magnitude Castor.

Three other bright stars stand toward

the east. One is Regulus, in Leo, where Jupiter shines many times brighter. Regulus is at the end of the handle of the Sickle, six stars that make a reasonably good outline of that implement.

CELESTIAL TIME TABLE FOR MARCH

March	EST	
1	2:00 pm	Moon passes south of Mars
	5:00 pm	Moon passes north of Saturn
3	midnight	Mars passes north of Saturn
5	2:00 am	Moon farthest, distance 251,400 miles
7	4:21 am	Moon in first quarter
12	4:00 pm	Moon passes north of Jupiter
	2:40 am	Algol at minimum
14	1:53 pm	Full moon
16	9:00 pm	Moon nearest, distance 225,800 miles
	11:30 pm	Algol (variable star in Perseus) at minimum brightness
19	8:20 pm	Algol at minimum
20	8:22 am	Sun over equator, spring commences in Northern Hemisphere
21	6:08 am	Moon in last quarter
26	5:00 pm	Moon passes south of Venus
28	5:49 pm	New moon; partial eclipse of sun visible from South Pacific and Antarctica
30	6:00 pm	Moon passes north of Mars



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Below Leo is Virgo, the virgin, with Spica. It is so low that absorption by the earth's atmosphere dims it considerably. To the left, in Bootes, the herdsman, is Arcturus, similarly dimmed.

Another way to find Arcturus is to look to the northeast for the Big Dipper, part of the great bear, Ursa Major. The two pointers in the dipper's bowl indicate the direction of the pole star, Polaris. Follow the curve of the dipper's handle around toward the right to find Arcturus.

Venus continues visible in the morning. Rising about an hour ahead of the sun, it's low in the east at dawn.

Ever since winter started in December, the sun has been moving northward in the sky. On March 20, at 8:22 a.m. EST (subtract one hour for CST, two hours for MST and three hours for PST), it reaches the halfway point. Then it stands directly over a point on the equator, in the Indian Ocean, north of the Seychelles. It's at the point in the sky called the vernal equinox. When the sun gets there, spring begins in the Northern Hemisphere and autumn in the Southern Hemisphere.

Jupiter isn't the only planet in Leo this month. However, you'll need a good-sized telescope to see one of the others: the far-distant Pluto. It's a little to the left of Denebola, which marks Leo's tail. On March 11 Pluto is directly opposite the sun and closest to earth—but still 2,886 million miles away.

Uranus also is opposite the sun this month, on St. Patrick's day. Its magnitude is 5.7, slightly brighter than 6.0, generally considered the limit of naked-eye visibility. But this is under ideal conditions of darkness and clarity of the sky. Near a city, with smoke and glare, it's difficult to see stars much fainter than fourth magnitude.

Just to the right of the word Virgo on the southern sky map (under Denebola, in Leo) three stars form a small triangle. The lowest is beta Virginis, and Uranus is just to the left. A pair of binoculars will help you locate it. In a small telescope it appears as a greenish disc, quite different from the point image of a star. Uranus is now at a distance of 1,671 million miles.

March also brings the year's first eclipse, but relatively few people will see it. On March 28 the moon will come in front of the sun. From some parts of the earth there will be a partial solar eclipse, with up to nine-tenths of the sun being covered.

This will be visible from an area in the South Pacific Ocean, at the southern tip of South America and in Antarctica near the Ross Sea. This region includes Marie Byrd Land, Victoria Land and Wilkes Land. The scientists in Antarctica will watch it.

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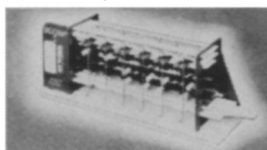
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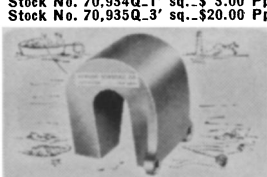
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