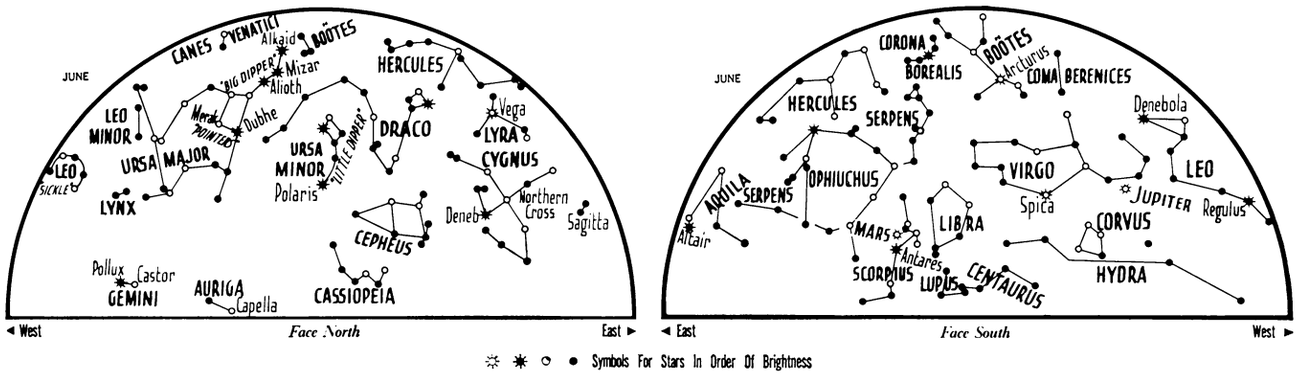

Mars comes closest in June

by James Stokley

Seven prominent stars and two brilliant planets, one of which—Mars—is closer and brighter than it has been for 13 years, are features of the astronomical program for June evenings.

They are shown on the accompanying maps, which give the appearance of the skies about 11:00 p.m., local daylight saving time, on June 1, and an hour earlier in the middle of the month. They would look the same at 9:00 p.m. on June 30. However, that will be soon after sunset and the sky will not be dark.

Mars is in the south, in the constellation of Scorpius. It is close to the star Antares which it passes to the north, while moving eastward, on June 3. The name Antares means "rival of Mars," given because both are noticeably red. It isn't much of a rival now because Mars is now about 16 times as bright as the star.

Both Mars and Antares are somewhat dimmed because of low altitude. If you could see them overhead, as they appear to people in the tropics, they would be much more conspicuous.

On June 8 Mars approaches most closely to earth. It will be 44,550,000 miles away. Next year it will pass behind the sun. Then it will come back and in August 1971, will be about 10 million miles closer than at present.

The other bright planet of the June evening is Jupiter, standing toward the southwest in Virgo. Jupiter sets soon after midnight, while Mars remains visible until dawn. Mars is nearly a third brighter than Jupiter on June 1.

Most prominent star of the June evening is Vega, high in the east in Lyra. Arcturus, high in the south in Boötes, is also conspicuous. Below it, in Virgo to the left of Jupiter, stands brilliant Spica.

Several other first magnitude stars also appear. But they are lower and increased atmospheric absorption dims their light. This is greatest for Capella, in Auriga, close to the northwestern horizon. ◇

CELESTIAL TIMETABLE

June	EDT	
1	11:00 a.m.	Moon nearest, distance 223,000 miles
6	11:40 p.m.	Moon in last quarter
8	midnight	Mars nearest, distance 44,550,000 miles
10	10:00 p.m.	Moon passes north of Venus and Saturn
11	10:00 a.m.	Venus passes south of Saturn
14	7:09 p.m.	New moon
16	11:00 a.m.	Moon farthest, distance 252,600 miles
17	1:00 p.m.	Venus farthest west of sun
21	9:55 a.m.	Sun farthest north, summer begins in Northern Hemisphere
22	4:00 p.m.	Moon passes south of Jupiter
	9:45 p.m.	Moon in first quarter
23	7:00 a.m.	Mercury farthest west of sun
27	9:00 a.m.	Moon passes south of Mars
29	4:04 p.m.	Full moon
	8:00 p.m.	Moon nearest, distance 221,800 miles