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Astronomy News

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the constellation Taurus. Jupiter will be visible from now until about the first part of May.

February:

Both *Mercury* and *Venus* are difficult if not impossible to observe. *Mars* and *Jupiter* are both high in the sky at sunset. *Saturn* is now a morning object and rises about two and one-half hours before sunrise. Saturn is found in the constellation of Sagittarius.

March:

The inferior planets (*Mercury* and *Venus*) are not visible during this month. *Mars* is moving into the constellation Taurus. *Jupiter* is close to the meridian at sunset. *Saturn* remains a morning object and rises about three hours before the sun.

April:

Toward the end of the month, *Mercury* is once again visible low in the western sky just after sunset. *Venus* is not visible for the entire month. *Mars* and *Jupiter* are both in Taurus. *Saturn* remains in Sagittarius. At the end of the month, it rises about five hours before sunrise. A second major annual meteor shower, the *Lyrids*, is visible from April 19 to April 24. The duration of the peak is about two days and is centered on April 21. This meteor shower usually yields about ten meteors per hour during the peak.

May:

The inferior planets are both visible low in the western sky shortly after sunset: *Mercury* is visible early in the month and *Venus* is visible toward the end of the month. *Mars* is still visible after sunset; it sets about three hours after the sun. *Jupiter* is moving ever closer to the sun, and by the end of the month it will not be visible. *Saturn* is still in Sagittarius and is on the meridian by sunrise.

June:

The inferior planets are difficult, if not impossible to observe this month. *Mars* is moving closer to the sun. It sets about three hours after the sun. *Jupiter* is not visible during the entire month. *Saturn* rises shortly after sunset.

Astronomy News

One of the fringe benefits of discovery has usually been the right to name what one has discovered. In the case of the unmanned NASA space probe, *Voyager II*, which first photographed a number of previously unknown satellites orbiting the planet Uranus during its fly-by of that giant planet in 1985-86, that duty went to a special naming

committee of the International Astronomical Union. The new names have finally been chosen, and these satellites no longer have to go by their straightforward but less-than-elegant temporary designations such as "1985 U1."

The naming follows the tradition, established by Uranus's discoverer, William Herschel, of using names of characters from English literature. All of the new names come from the works of Shakespeare and from Pope's *Rape of the Lock*. Some of the names may be quite familiar. "Puck," for example, comes from Shakespeare's play *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and names the largest of the newly found moons (diameter: 170 kilometers). Others may be a little more difficult to place. Some of the new names are "Portia," "Juliet," "Rosalind," "Desdemona," "Cressida," "Belinda," "Cordelia," "Ophelia" and "Bianca." We would be interested to hear from any sleuth of English literature--particularly if he or she is a student--who can match the satellites to the appropriate play or passage.

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration has now established a central clearinghouse for education media. These include NASA slides, filmstrips, and videotapes. See *Science Notes* in this issue for more information.

The information about this semester's sky was obtained from the following: the *1989 Observers Handbook*, pp. 32-42, and from *Activities in Astronomy*, p. 66, Hoff, Kelsey, and Neff, 2nd edition, Kendall/Hunt Publishing, 1984. For more information on current astronomical events, the following are recommended:

Bishop, R. L. 1989. *Observers Handbook*. The Royal Astronomical Society of Canada, 136 Dupont St., Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5R 1V2.

Astronomy. AstroMedia, a division of Kalmbach Publishing Company, 1027 N. Seventh St., Milwaukee, WI 53233.

Sky Calendar. Abrams Planetarium, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI 48824.

Sky and Telescope. Sky Publishing Corporation, 49 Bay State Road, Cambridge, MA 02238-9102.