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Astronomy Bulletin - The 1989 Spring Sky

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ASTRONOMY BULLETIN

In 1985, Dr. Larry A. Kelsey, Assistant Professor of Astronomy and Science Education, and Dr. Darrel Hoff, Professor of Astronomy and Science Education at the University of Northern Iowa, obtained a grant from the Iowa Science Foundation for the dissemination of astronomical information to the teachers of Iowa. Their efforts resulted in the publication of the UNI *Astronomy Bulletin*, a bi-monthly summary of what was visible in the night skies of our state, as well as current astronomical news and teaching resources of interest to elementary and secondary teachers.

The science education community in Iowa was saddened by Dr. Kelsey's tragic death in 1987. He was killed in an automobile accident while on a field trip with students during a university exchange program in England. Dr. Hoff has left UNI and is now working at the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Hence, the UNI *Astronomy Bulletin* ended. However, the editor of the *Iowa Science Teachers Journal* has given us the opportunity to continue to pursue, within the pages of this journal, the goals of the original journal: to compile relevant information about astronomy and make it readily available to Iowa science educators.

THE 1989 SPRING SKY

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January - June 1989

January:
All of the major planets with the exception of *Saturn* are visible for at least part of January. It is possible to view *Mercury* low in the southwest shortly after sunset for approximately the first half of the month. *Venus* is a morning object and can be viewed low in the southeast, shortly before sunrise. *Mars* is close to the meridian (the imaginary north-south line that divides the east from the west) around sunset; it sets around midnight. The giant of the planets, *Jupiter*, is in

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