Morning Planets: Saturn, Mars, and Mercury can be found low in the east at dawn early in the month. Saturn is at its greatest elongation on May 9 when it's 26° west of the Sun. But due to the shallow angle of the ecliptic relative to the horizon in the morning sky, Mercury never gets very far from the horizon. Binoculars will help in spotting the elusive planet. Mercury's brightness or “magnitude” increases from +1.0 to −0.8 during May. On what date can you last find Mercury before it’s lost in the glare of the rising Sun? Mars is 16° to the upper right of Mercury on May 6. By the end of May, the angular separation between Mercury and Mars has grown to 31°. Mars, at magnitude 1.1, is essentially on the other side of the solar system from us. Earth will be moving closer to Mars all year as we approach the Mars opposition of January 2025. On May 1, Mars is 184 million miles away and by May 31 Mars is 173 million miles from Earth. Saturn is 14° to the upper right of Mars on May 1 and 35° to the upper right of Mars on May 31. A view of Saturn through a telescope reveals Saturn’s rings. The inclination of the ring system changes as Saturn revolves around the Sun in its 30.2-year orbit. We are coming up on a ring plane crossing next year. That’s when the rings appear edge-on as seen from the Earth. In mid-May, Saturn's rings are tilted 2.5° from edge-on. Venus is too close to the Sun to be seen this month but will re-emerge in July’s evening sky.

Evening Planets: Jupiter disappears from view early in the month leaving the evening sky void of bright planets this May. We'll have to wait until late June to see the planet Mercury emerge into the evening sky. Jupiter is in conjunction with the Sun on May 18. Uranus is in conjunction with the Sun on May 13 and can’t be seen this month.

Sunset Planets: Jupiter, Saturn, and the Pleiades can be seen in the western sky after sunset. Jupiter is in conjunction with the Sun on May 18. Saturn is at opposition on May 8 and is essentially on the other side of the sky from us. Earth will be 5° farther north and south each month compared to the average range. The Moon is approaching a Major Standstill in January 2023. A Major Standstill happens every 16.8 years as the Moon’s orbit precesses. It causes the Moon’s declination to range more than 5° farther north and south each month.