

Tonight's Sky: 2017

September

Your guide to constellations, deep-sky objects, planets, and events. Tonight's Sky, highlights of the September Sky.

Evening Planets

Early in the month, Jupiter appears low in the west right after sunset.

Try to catch a quick view of Jupiter through a telescope before it dips below the horizon.

After the sky darkens, turn your attention to Saturn in the southwestern sky.

A telescope will provide a wonderful look at the planet's signature feature, its rings.

Constellations and Deep-Sky Objects

September nights feature the "wet quarter" of the sky. Two neighboring constellations bear ancient references to water.

Aquarius is one of the oldest constellations, recognized even by early civilizations. In ancient mythologies, Aquarius is the god of the waters. Look for the Water Jar, a group of stars shaped like a Y.

A rich, compact cluster of stars can be seen in Aquarius. Known as M2, it contains about 150,000 stars located about 37,500 light-years away.

Binoculars present it well, but a small telescope reveals much more detail in the cluster's compact center.

Nearby lies the great constellation Capricornus. Known in mythology as the Water Goat, it represents a creature that fed and watered the infant Zeus, ruler of the Greek gods.

Algedi is the brightest star in Capricornus. It's visible in binoculars as an elongated star.

This odd shape is due to a visual trick. From our distant vantage point, two unrelated stars appear to be close together.

Capricornus also hosts a dense cluster of stars, M30. A small telescope easily resolves individual stars in the cluster.

Morning Planets

Venus shines brilliantly in the eastern sky before sunrise.

By mid-month, Mercury and Mars appear between Venus and the horizon, but they could be difficult to spot in the morning twilight.

Mercury disappears from view in late September, but Mars remains in the sky and moves closer to Venus as the month progresses.

Ending

The night sky is always a celestial showcase. Explore its wonders from your own backyard.