

JANUARY 2010 NAKED EYE ASTRONOMY.

Mercury will be visible low in the morning twilight this month. It will be at greatest Western elongation – farthest from the Sun – on January 27.

Venus : will pass through superior conjunction –opposite side of the Sun to Earth - on January 11. It will then return to the evening sky in April 2010.

Mars is now rising well before midnight, but is still quite small in telescopes, and only about 13 arc seconds in diameter at a distance of 0.7 au. It will be close to the Moon on the 3rd and on the 30th. Mars is heading towards opposition on January 19, when it will be visible all night long – the main target for summer viewing.

Jupiter now is setting before 10pm in the constellation of Capricorn, and is an evening object. It will be close to the Moon on January 18.

Saturn passed through conjunction with the Sun on September 18 and is now a morning object. Saturn rises around midnight at the start of January. The rings are starting to open out again following the recent ring plane passage.

Moon: Full Moon will be on January 1 and January 30 – two full moons in a month. The second full moon is colloquially known as the BLUE Moon. This is not as rare as one may think, and happens on the average every 34 months. And as a coincidence, there will be another blue Moon for WA in March 2010. The Full Moon of Jan 1 coincides with lunar perigee, so at rise time, the full moon will appear a little larger than usual.

New Moon will be on January 15. This will herald a very long annular eclipse visible over Africa, India and China. For WA, there will be no eclipse of any sort. See

<http://aa.usno.navy.mil/data/docs/eclipse/map110.pdf>

Site of the Month: Blue Moons – an explanation of the dates for 2010. It depends on where your time zone is situated.....

See

<http://www.obliquity.com/astro/blue2009.html>

ASTRONOMY IS LOOKING UP !!