

# THE SKY THIS MONTH

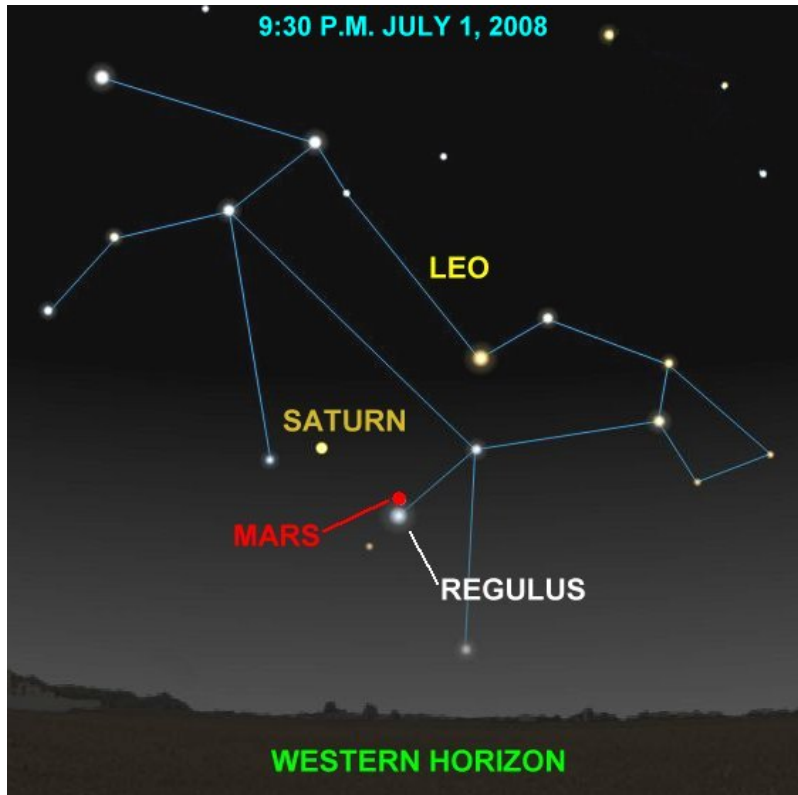
**JULY 2008**

## **MARS, SATURN, THE MOON AND REGULUS GET COZY**

One of the most splendid sights in astronomy occurs when two or more objects appear to be in close proximity. These events (conjunctions) are the most impressive when the objects are particularly bright. This July, there will be several conjunctions involving the Moon, Mars, Saturn and constellation Leo's brightest star Regulus.

Let's begin with Mars and Regulus on Canada Day, July 1st. These two objects will appear less than a degree apart in the low western sky just after sunset.

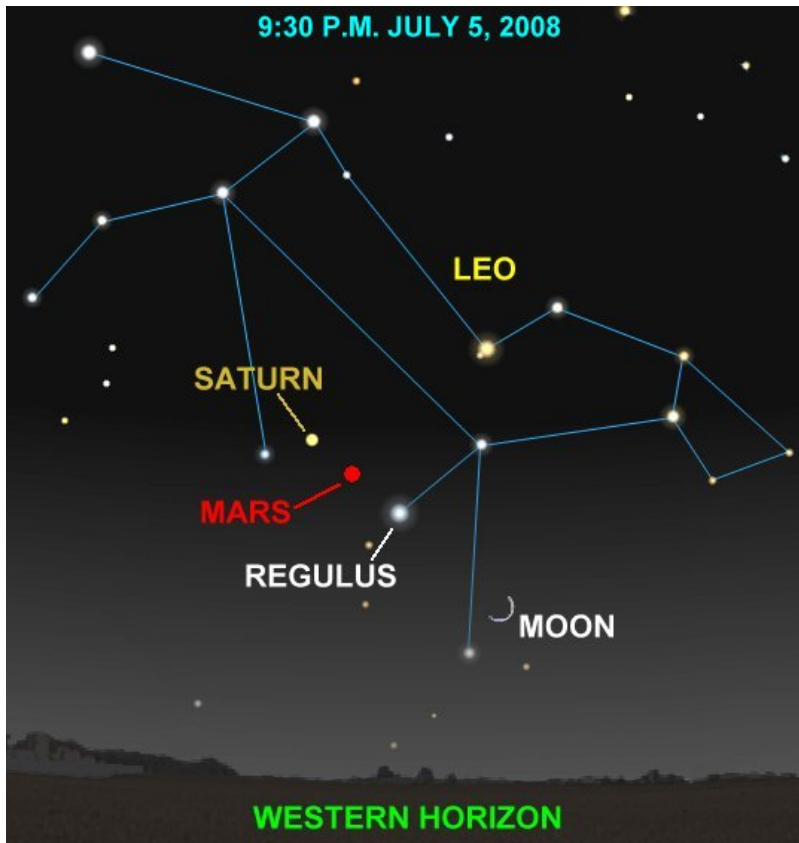
Canada Day seems to be a day of conjunctions for Saturn. One year earlier on July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2007, Saturn and Venus appeared a degree apart in the western sky.



Mars and Regulus on the early evening of July 1<sup>st</sup>. Saturn appears 5 degrees east of the pair. Image courtesy TheSky6 by Software Bisque.

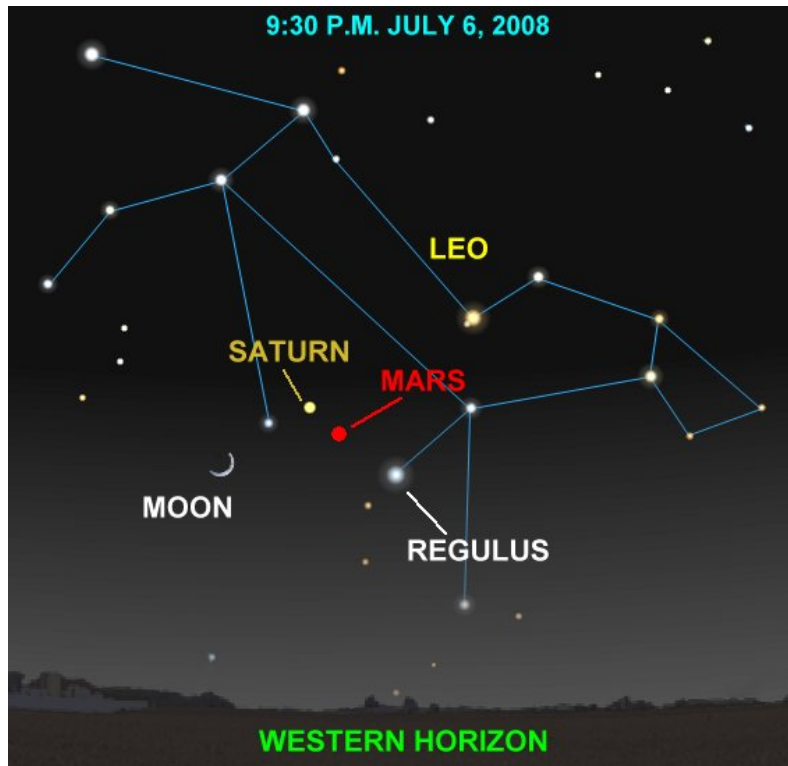
Mars and Regulus will appear close together, but their true distances from us differ greatly. Mars will be 317 million kilometres from us, which sounds like a large distance, but consider Regulus' distance of 77.5 light years; a staggering 733 trillion kilometres!

A spectacular sight occurs on the evening of July 5<sup>th</sup>, when Saturn, Mars, Regulus and a very thin crescent Moon will form a straight line in the low western sky. The Moon will be the closest object of the four at a mere 373,300 kilometres distant. Saturn will be 1.5 billion kilometers distant.



An amazing conjunction of four bright objects will occur on July 5<sup>th</sup>.  
Image courtesy TheSky6 by Software Bisque.

One day later (July 6<sup>th</sup>), the four will appear in a triangular shape, thanks to the Moon, which has moved in its orbit since the previous evening.

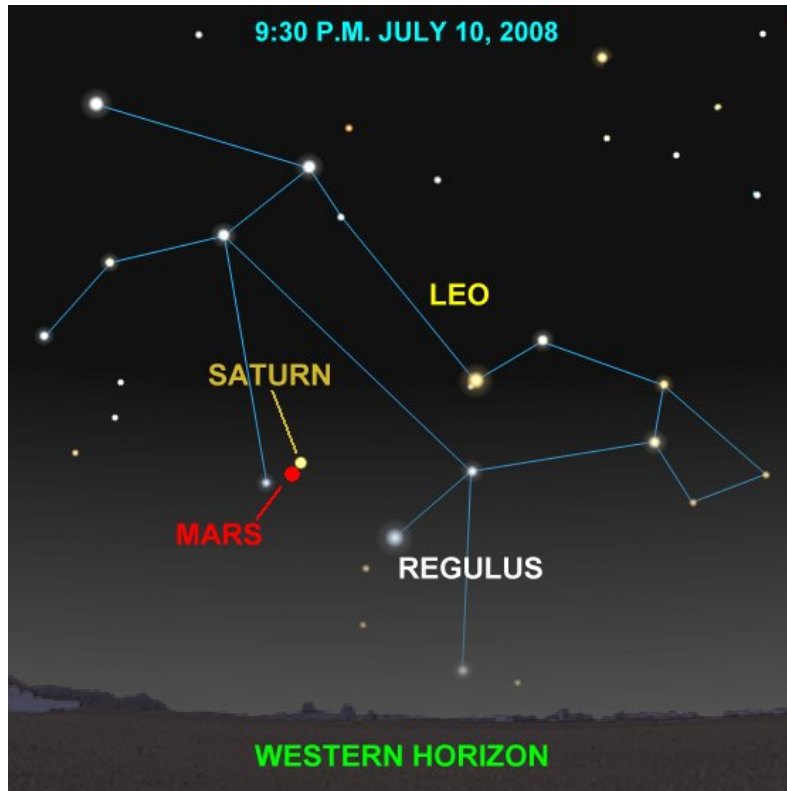


The Moon will mark a corner of a triangle with Saturn and Regulus on July 6<sup>th</sup>. Image courtesy TheSky6 by Software Bisque.

Finally, Mars will get cozy with Saturn on the evening of July 10th. The Moon will be 50 degrees east of the pair in a 60% (gibbous) phase.

Although these conjunctions offer little scientific value, they can give us an excuse to “smell the celestial roses”.

While you are viewing the conjunctions, take some time out to turn your head to the southeastern horizon. There you might see a much brighter object just rising for the season. Jupiter will thank you for it!



Mars' final stop will be near Saturn on July 10<sup>th</sup>. Image courtesy TheSky6 by Software Bisque.

## ASTRONOMICAL EVENTS

Two summer star parties will be held at the Mill of Kintail Gatehouse grounds on the nights of Friday, August 29<sup>th</sup> and Friday, September 26<sup>th</sup>. For information about the events, such as times (including rain dates), location maps, celestial treats and contact information, please visit [www.castor2.ca/parties](http://www.castor2.ca/parties).

## **THE SKY LAST MONTH – JUNE 2008**



The Moon and Jupiter rise in the Mill of Kintail's southeastern sky.  
Image by the author.

## **THE SKY NEXT MONTH – AUGUST 2008**

**SEE IF YOU CAN SPOT THE SEVENTH PLANET**

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