

## September Skies

This month planets are a bit scarcer and a little harder to find. Mercury and Mars are both hiding in the glare of the Sun. Jupiter is still easily found in the southwestern sky as evening begins. By the end of the month it will be barely 10 degrees above southwestern horizon at twilight.

Saturn can be found in the early dawn about 6 degrees above brilliant Venus just above the eastern horizon. As the month progresses it will rise earlier but be noticeably dimmer because the angle of its rings had decreased to being only 15 degrees from edge on. By month's end it will rise almost 4 hours before sunrise.

Venus's stint as the morning star is slowly coming to an end as it moves slowly toward the eastern horizon rising only a half hour before sunrise by the end of the month. Still brilliant at magnitude -3.8, it will be easy to spot in the early morning sky.

The moon will be full on the 7<sup>th</sup>, last quarter on the 14<sup>th</sup>, new on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and first quarter on the 30<sup>th</sup>. The Sun will arrive at the equinox at 10:03 Mountain Daylight Time on September 23<sup>rd</sup>! This marks the beginning of Fall in the Northern Hemisphere and Spring in the Southern Hemisphere.

This month marks the return of the Enchanted Skies Star Party (ESSP) to Socorro. Running from September 20<sup>th</sup> through September 23<sup>rd</sup>, there is an exciting lineup of events scheduled this year. It begins on the Wednesday the 20<sup>th</sup> with an observing trip to 10,000 ft in the Magdalena Mountains.

On Thursday the 21<sup>st</sup> two special events include an "insiders" tour of the VLA as well as an evening field trip to the U.S. Air Force's GEODSS satellite tracking facility at the north end of White Sands Missile Range.

On Friday the 22<sup>nd</sup> the Keynote speaker will be Dr. Larry Crumpler of the New Mexico Museum of Natural History and Science. As a member of the NASA's Mars Rover Science Team, he will give a talk "Field Report from the Surface of Mars" that will present some of the fascinating discoveries made by the two Mars Exploration rovers.

Saturday will again feature the "Dark Sky Night at the Pound Ranch" with its chuck wagon dinner and campfire entertainment. For more information visit the ESSP web site at: HYPERLINK "<http://www.socorro-nm.com/starparty/index.html>" <http://www.socorro-nm.com/starparty/index.html>. To register, drop by the Socorro Tourism Office just west of the Plaza across from the Socorro Fire Dept. on Fisher Ave. or, call them at 505-835-8927.

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