

Moon glides by bright star, Mars next week before dawn

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(PhysOrg.com) -- The Moon puts on a great show before dawn next week as it passes by a bright star and planet, according to the editors of StarDate magazine.

The Moon stands closest to Aldebaran, the bright star known as the eye of Taurus, the bull, an hour before dawn on Tuesday the 26th in the eastern sky. The Moon shines next to [Mars](#) in the east at the same time the following morning. Both Mars and Aldebaran glow orange, but right

now Aldebaran is about twice as bright as Mars.

Color is a rare commodity in the night sky. The sky itself is black, most of the stars are white, and the Moon is painted in shades of white, gray, and black.

Like a neon bulb, Aldebaran produces its own color. Cooler stars shine redder than hotter ones, and Aldebaran's surface is thousands of degrees cooler than the surface of the Sun. Other prominent reddish-orange stars include Antares (whose name means 'rival of Mars'), which puts in its best show during July and August evenings, and Betelgeuse, in Orion, which highlights the winter sky.

Mars doesn't generate any light on its own. Instead, like the [Moon](#), it shines by reflecting sunlight. The light strikes a surface that is painted in varying shades of orange, yellow, gray, and black. Most of the orange and yellow are produced by fine-grained dust that contains a lot of [iron oxide](#), better known as rust.

As Mars grows brighter later in the year, its color will appear to grow more intense. By year's end, you'll see why it is called the [Red Planet](#), as Mars provides one of the most vivid spots of color in the [night sky](#).

Published bi-monthly by The University of Texas at Austin McDonald Observatory, StarDate magazine provides readers with skywatching tips, skymaps, beautiful astronomical photos, astronomy news and features, and a 32-page Sky Almanac each January.

Provided by University of Texas McDonald Observatory

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