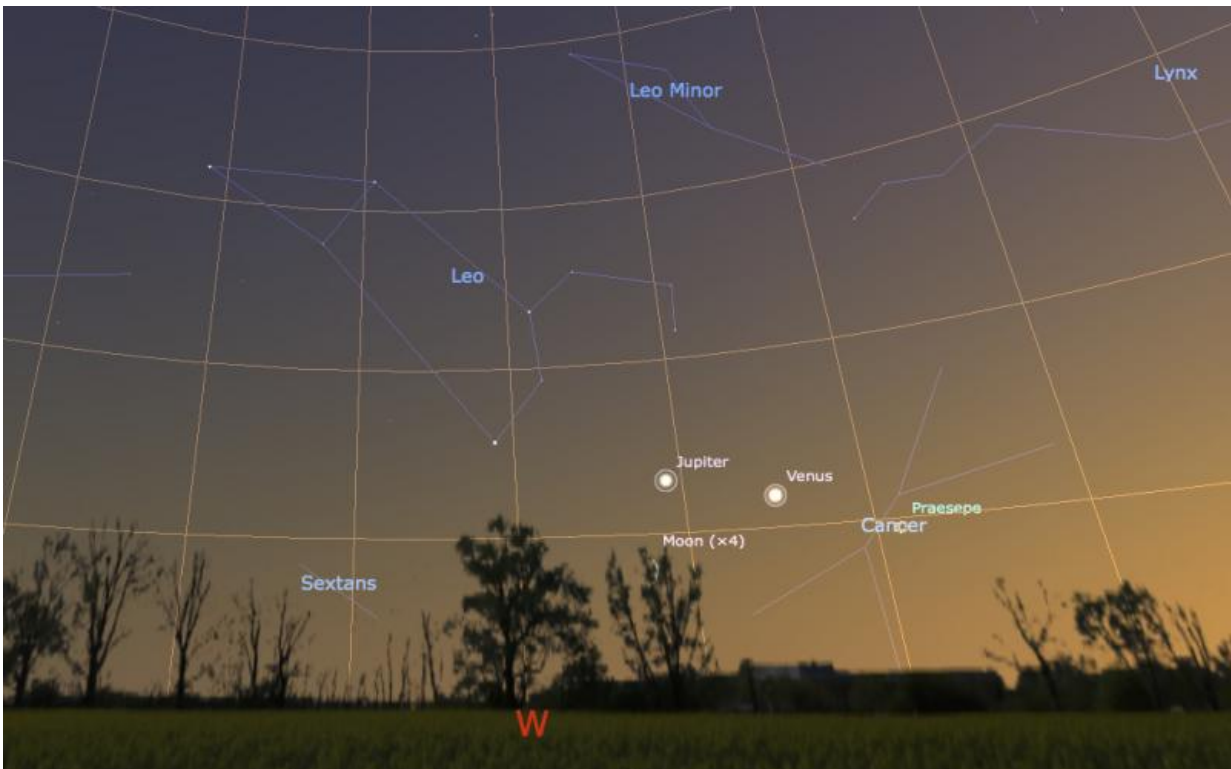


Close approach of Venus and Jupiter visible in evening sky

June 15 2015



View of Jupiter and Venus in the evening sky after sunset at around 11pm on 20 June 2015. On this night the crescent Moon lies just below Jupiter. To the right of Venus, using binoculars, may just be seen Praesepe, the famous "Beehive" star cluster, though this will be a difficult object in the twilight and at such a low altitude. The bright star to the left of Jupiter is known as Regulus, the principal star of the constellation Leo, though it is actually a multiple stellar system.

Armagh Observatory reports that the next two weeks will provide an interesting opportunity to observe the brightest planet, Venus, and the largest planet, Jupiter, as they move towards one another in the evening twilight.

Venus has been a spectacular object in the [evening sky](#) after sunset for most of this year, and in February passed very close to both Mars and Uranus. The planet has now been joined in the west by the largest planet in the solar system, namely Jupiter, which now lies to the left of Venus at about the same altitude as its much brighter neighbour. The two [planets](#) are easily visible in the west as they sink towards the horizon in the evening twilight. As viewed from our moving vantage point, the Earth, both planets appear to be moving towards one another at a rate of about half a degree a day. They will meet at the end of the month at a closest approach distance of less than half a degree, that is, less than the angular diameter of the Moon.

The average frequency of such close approaches of Venus and Jupiter is about once every several years, the last one occurring on 18 August 2014 and the next - an even closer approach - occurring on 27 August 2016. These events always provide an interesting talking point as people notice, perhaps for the first time, the two unusually bright lights in the sky and their daily motion against the background stars. The image shows the sky view towards the West at around 11pm on 20 June 2015.

Provided by Armagh Observatory

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