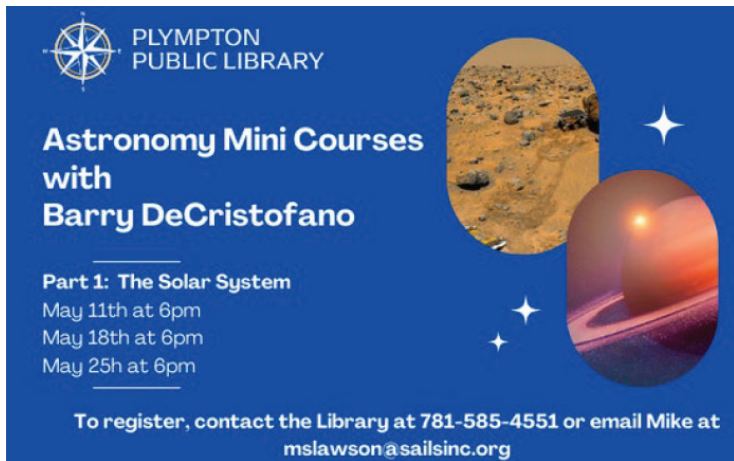
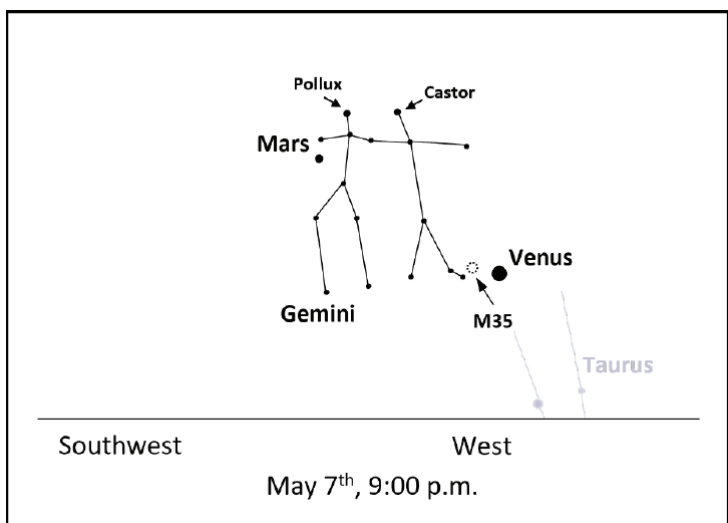


WHAT'S UP?

Hi. Before we head to the skies above, I want to let you know about a series of astronomy mini-courses being offered (for free!) at the Plympton Public Library in the coming months. Over the years that we've done astronomy programming at the Library, we inevitably field questions that lead to discussions beyond the planned scope of the session. The thought behind this summer's programs is to provide astronomy information that is both, broad in scope (from beginners to more seasoned astronomy folks) and covers a wide range of topics. So, Carolyn and I have put together four courses: The Solar System, The Structure of the Universe, Observing, and Equipment. That pretty much covers the "wide-range" criterion. Each topic will be covered in three sessions. Hopefully this will cover the "broad in scope" piece. The first course, *The Solar System*, will be on May 11th, May 18th, and May 25th. Each session starts at 6:00 p.m. *The Structure of the Universe* sessions will be on June 1st, 22nd, and 29th. *Observing* will be on July 13th, 20th, and 27th. To round out the summer, *Equipment* will be on August 10th, 17th, and 24th. I'm not planning on offering views through telescopes at these sessions so we won't have to worry about scheduling rain dates. If you've come to any of our events over the years, some of what is covered will be review for you, but I think most of it will be new. Don't hesitate to email me at astroblog@comcast.net with any questions you may have about these programs.



Planet Roundup: Venus is still dazzling in the west after sunset, but not as high in the sky as it was last month. From the 7th through the 10th, Venus will be within 2½ degrees of the open star cluster known as M35 or Messier 35. If you remember, Mars was passing near this group in mid-March. Covering an area about the size of a full Moon, it is comprised of several hundred stars. At a distance from us of 2,800 light years, M35 lies just to the northwest of the left foot of Castor – one of the two Gemini twin brothers. Over the course of these four days, Venus will go from being just to the right of M35 to being just above it. Mars is passing by Castor's twin, Pollux, on its way out of the constellation. Noticing these changes – Mars moving from the feet of the twins to their heads and Venus now nearing their feet – reminds us of the constant motions of the planets and brings us closer to being a part of our Solar System. By 4:00 a.m., Saturn (at magnitude 1.0) can be found about 12 degrees above the east-southeastern horizon and Neptune is just above the horizon in the east. It is already getting light in the morning by the time Jupiter and Mercury rise. Uranus is less than 2 degrees from the Sun and too close to it for us to see. The Full Moon is on May 5th, the 3Q will be on the 12th, the New Moon on the 19th, and the 1Q Moon occurs next on May 27th.



You can reach me at astroblog@comcast.net with any questions and comments. This is *What's Up?* installment #70.

Barry