

For those of you who love a parade, there is a grand one still going on in the early evening hours in the west just after sunset. There is even a new addition to the other stalwart three that have been holding forth these last few weeks.

Venus, Saturn, and Mars have been making their presence known for a while now, and fleet-footed Mercury has joined the group in the early evening sky.

If you want to see this newcomer be outside looking west between a half-hour to 45 minutes after sunset. Find a place with an absolutely clear, unobstructed view of the western sky.

Mercury is the tiny dot about three degrees above the horizon. Binoculars will be helpful because being that low on the horizon it could get lost in the cloudy soup that lines the area.

If you are having a hard time finding it wait until Tuesday, July 27, when Mercury will be very close to Regulus, the brightest star in Leo the Lion. They both will be even closer to the horizon so again, use binoculars.

As for the rest of the parade, Venus, the brightest object you will see in the west is about halfway between Regulus and the Saturn/Mars duo.

The latter two being about five degrees apart. That is about the width of your binocular field of view which will put both of them in your view at the same time.

If you have been watching these three wanderers—which is what the ancient astronomers called them—for the last few weeks you have noticed how far they all have traveled. They still have more traveling to do, so keep watching.

A waxing Moon is already up in the early evening which will make observing in the later

evening difficult.

How about a viewing challenge? Double stars are always a wonder to look at. I have two of them for you.

The first is Albireo, the beak, or nose, star of Cygnus the Swan. It is on the opposite end of Cygnus from Deneb, one of the stars making up the Summer Triangle. It can be located about half way up the sky looking east.

A telescope will be needed for this one. Albireo is a magnificent double because one of the pair is yellow and one is blue.

The second double star challenge is even better, at least to my way of thinking.

It is Epsilon Lyrae, the Double-Double star. To find it first locate Vega, the highest, and brightest of the three stars in the Summer Triangle. Look about one degree (the width of your pinkie finger held at arms length) down and left from Vega.

You might even be able to see without any optical aid that Epsilon Lyrae is a double, in binoculars you will certainly be able to. But in a telescope, even a small one, you will see that each of the doubles is a double—a total of four stars, hence the Double-Double name.

SKY WATCH: Full Moon, Sunday, July 25. Four of the easily visible planets can be found in the early evening hours in the western sky. The fifth, Jupiter, will rise in the east and be visible by 11:30 p.m. Jupiter will continue to move westward against the background stars until December when it will be an early evening object again.

Fellow gas giant planet, Uranus, is still within five degrees up and right of Jupiter and can be seen in the same field of binocular view as Jupiter.

There is one star that is slightly dimmer than Uranus between the pair. If you want to make sure you are seeing Uranus, it will be the bright dot that is the furthest of the two.