

I had originally had thoughts of returning to the area between the spout of the “teapot” of Sagittarius and the “stinger” of Scorpius to look at some of the star clusters in the area.

But, alas, an almost-full Moon is in that location now and will wash out any substantive viewing for the next several days.

This is being written in advance of the Nebraska Star Party where we are hoping to have a good time with our old friends on earth and in the sky as well. You will have to wait at least another week for me to astound you with tales of astronomical daring-do.

In the meantime we will need to return to our old friends here, the planets, that are still putting on a good show for us just after sunset in the west.

After a very close conjunction last week, Venus, Mars and Saturn are still in somewhat of a close grouping. Ringed Saturn is the farthest to the right with bright Venus and dimming Mars to the right.

The trio will be on display until early September. Watch as Venus moves further to the left each evening and Mars and Saturn dip toward the horizon.

Saturn will be gone by the end of this week and the other two will last until the second week of September.

One planet has proved elusive for the last few weeks, one of the outer gas giant planets, Neptune, has stood alone with no nearby guide to help in its location.

On Monday, Aug. 23, an almost full-Moon will be standing very close to the blue planet, but again, the bright reflected light of the Moon will most likely wash out any glimpse we might get

of the planet.

The next night, Aug. 24, may prove a little better as the Moon will move away from the planet and give you a chance to isolate it in your telescope. If you do want to try a look on Monday, the tiny blue dot of Neptune will be directly below the Moon's disc. On Tuesday it will be about 10 degrees (the width of your clinched fist held at arms length) to the Moon's right.

Elsewhere in the sky, Jupiter and Uranus are above the eastern horizon by 10 p.m. MDT and can both be seen in the same binocular field of view. There are one or two slightly dimmer stars between the two planets so don't confuse them for blue-green Uranus.

While there see if you can spot the four brightest moons of Jupiter discovered by Galileo. If you have even a small telescope you can watch them change position in relation to Jupiter by the hour.

Sky watch: Full Moon on Aug. 24.

Next week: Exciting tales from the Nebraska Star Party.