

## **Our Night Sky for September 9<sup>th</sup>, 2024**

**If you've had a chance to take in our night sky on these lovely summer evenings you may spot the occasional wanderer, something that doesn't fit in with the familiar patterns of stars that are the constellations. The ancient Greeks named these heavenly objects Planets which meant wanderer. These objects just didn't fit into the expected patterns of stars. And sometimes they acted very strangely. As they seasonally advanced across the sky, just as it is happening right now, Mars only rises early in the morning, just two or three hours ahead of the sun. But as fall proceeds it will rise closer to midnight until as it rushes along on its orbit it will rise before midnight about mid October and ever earlier it rises mid evening now trailing behind the sun. But about mid December something really strange happens, in fact so strange it helped the ancient Greeks piece together how our solar system actually works. Mars appears to move backwards in our sky from December 6 until February 23. This motion is called retrograde, and it occurs about every two years as Earth moving much quicker catches up to Mars. Mars appears to move backward against the background stars. Much harder to spot because of their slow movement across the sky, the outer planets are in retrograde some of the year, Jupiter and Saturn for about five months this year. All for the same reason, Earth speeds along on its orbit and the slower moving outer planets appear to move backwards against the background of stars. There is lots to see and understand in Our Night Sky.**