

The view from Asheville, NC,  
on June 23 about 10:00 p.m. EDT

Year 2021



# Mars Bumbles Through the Beehive

**WHILE YOU'RE ADMIRING** the dusk sky, keep an eye on Mars. Even though it's currently just 3.9" across and a relatively pale magnitude 1.8, Mars still knows how to get our attention.

On the evening of June 23rd, the Red Planet will shine near the center of the Beehive Cluster (M44) in Cancer. Use

▲ **BEEHIVE PLUS ONE** Because the Beehive Cluster (M44, in Cancer) lies just north of the ecliptic, the swarm of stars periodically welcomes the Moon and planets. Mars passes through the heart of the cluster on June 22nd, though both objects will be low in a twilight sky. This photo is from March 1995 and shows the Red Planet positioned well east of M44.

binoculars and look low in the west-northwest, starting about 90 minutes after sunset. From mid-northern latitudes the planet and cluster stand just 7° above the horizon as twilight deepens and set soon after. Mars will hover close to the cluster from June 22nd to 24th, so you have a couple of backup opportunities in case of clouds on the 23rd.

For a fun mental exercise, try to imagine the scene in 3D. Mars is practically under your nose at 358 million kilometers away, compared to the Beehive's 593 light-year distance — almost 16 billion times more remote.\*\*\*