



# *STARRY TRAILS*

*MAY 2016*

Warmer weather, clearer skies and fantastic celestial sights are in store for the next few months!! To start off, the month of May will bring us several rare events!! On May 9<sup>th</sup>, we will have the Transit of Mercury. The small planet Mercury will cross between Earth and the Sun and cast a shadow on the Sun, starting at 7:14am and ending at 2:41pm. The Transit of Mercury will not happen again until November 11<sup>th</sup>, 2019. **When viewing the sun, use proper eye protection.** Next, the planet Mars will be closest to Earth since 2005. Look for Mars in the Southeast about an hour after sunset on May 30<sup>th</sup> (illustration 1). Last, we will have a Blue Moon on May 21<sup>st</sup>. The true explanation of a Blue Moon is when we have four Full Moons in one season. The third Full Moon is called the Blue Moon!

For our hike, we will begin around 9:30pm. Let's grab our jacket, Starry Trail Map and binoculars. We can still enjoy a few more hikes without mosquitoes! We will start by facing west. The two stars that look almost the same are Gemini, the Twins. The bright red-orange star to the right of Gemini is Capella. To the left of Gemini is the star Procyon (Illustration 2).

Turn to the left or direction south. Look up and a brilliant object will catch your eye, the planet Jupiter! Pick up your binoculars and focus in on Jupiter. If you are steady, you may see a few pinpoints of light around Jupiter. These would be the largest moons of Jupiter! When you view Jupiter through a telescope, you will clearly see the four Galilean moons. To the right of Jupiter, look for the shape of a backwards question mark. This is the head of Leo, the Lion. How about a challenge? Take your binoculars and scan to the right and slightly up of Jupiter. Do you see the beautiful Beehive Star Cluster (M44)?

Trek to the opposite part of the sky and you will find the Big Dipper, high overhead, pouring water out of the cup, like the spring rains! Take the two stars at the end of the cup of the Big Dipper and draw an imaginary line to the next bright star. You have reached the North Star! The North Star, or Polaris, is at the end of the handle of the Little Dipper (Illustration 3). Queen Cassiopeia, the W shape, is very low in the north or below the Little Dipper.

Turn to the right or east. Look high, almost overhead, and arc off the handle of the Big Dipper to the bright yellow-orange star, Arcturus. To the right, you will see a bright blue star. This is Spica, part of the constellation Virgo. By the way, Virgo hosts the sky's richest zone of galaxies! It is simply great telescope viewing in this part of the sky.

For the last part of our hike, trek back to Arcturus. Just below Arcturus and to the left, you will come upon a semi-circle of stars. It looks almost like a necklace, but actually it is the Northern Crown or Corona Borealis. I think it looks like a smiley face! Hike down and to the left from Corona Borealis. There you will see a keystone shape. This is the body of Hercules, the bravest and strongest hero! Binocular time!

Take your binoculars and scan around Hercules. Do you see the fuzzy object? This is the finest globular Star Cluster (M13) in the northern skies! If you head down and to the left, you will spot the bright star, Vega (Illustration 4).

Wow! Another great night of Stargazing! Take one last breath of fresh spring air and head inside.

### **Next month, signs of summer and great views of Saturn, Mars & Jupiter!**

#### **Highlights**

**May 5** – Eta Aquarid Meteor Shower peaks

**May 6** – New Moon.

**May 8** – The Crescent Moon joins Betelgeuse & Aldebaran in the western sky 40 minutes after sunset.

**May 9** – **Transit of Mercury. Starting at 7:14am and concluding at 2:41pm. Use proper eye protection.**

**May 13** – First Quarter Moon.

**May 14** – National Astronomy Day.

**May 14 & 15** – Gibbous Moon & Jupiter put on a great show in the evening sky.

**May 21** – The Full Moon. According to folklore it is the Full Flower Moon. Also, the Blue Moon, the third of four Full Moons for the season of spring.

**May 21-24** – Mars peaks in brightness.

**May 22**– Mars at opposition.

**May 29** – Last Quarter Moon.

**May 30** – Mars closest to Earth since 2005, 46.8 million miles away!

**Brightest Stars:** **West** – Procyon, Castor, Pollux, Capella. **Overhead** – Regulus. **East** – Arcturus, Spica, Vega.

**Binocular Highlights** The Moon, Jupiter, Beehive Cluster M44, Deep sky objects around Capella (M36, 37, 38), Hercules Globular Star Cluster M13.

**Telescope Highlights** The Moon, Mars, Jupiter, M10, M12, M51, M35, M44, M13, M57, M3, M81, M82, M92, M104, M35, 36, 37, 38 (near Capella).

[Starry Trails](#) is a fun & easy way to explore the night sky as it appears from your own backyard! Journey over to [StarryTrails.com](#) & get everything you need to navigate the night sky! Starry Trails is a free publication & your able to make copies to pass along to your friends & family so they can learn and enjoy the night sky with you!

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*Written by Suzie Dills – Remember to download your Illustrations & Star Map!*