



STARRY TRAILS

MAY 2015

Spring always brings renewed excitement for stargazers! Warmer weather and clearer skies are here! We have fantastic celestial events coming our way over the next few months! Jupiter continues to close the gap on Venus and Mercury makes its best evening appearance of the year during the first week in May. Head out about one hour after sunset and face west. Mercury can be found to the lower right of Venus.

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 dazzling object that catches your eye is the planet Venus! You can't miss it. To the right of Venus you will see the bright red-orange star, Capella. To the left, is the star Procyon. Right above Venus, there will be two stars that look almost the same. These are Gemini, the Twins.

Head up and to the left of Gemini and you will spot another brilliant object, 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. Just above 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 of Jupiter. Do you see the beautiful Beehive Star Cluster (M44)?

To the right of Leo you will find the Big Dipper, high overhead, pouring water out of the cup, like the spring rains! Turn right or direction north. 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).

As we head into the later part of May, the golden colored object rising in the southeast is Saturn! I love to view Saturn through a telescope!

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

Next month, signs of summer!

Highlights

May 3 – Full Moon. According to folklore it is the Full Flower Moon.

May 6 – Best and highest position for Mercury in the western sky one hour after sunset.

May 6 – Eta Aquarid Meteor Shower peaks.

May 11 – Last Quarter Moon.

May 18 – New Moon.

May 21 – The Crescent Moon & Venus put on a show in the western sky after sunset.

May 22 – The Crescent Moon, Venus & Jupiter are together in the western sky!

May 24– The Moon passes south of Jupiter.

May 25 – First Quarter Moon.

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

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

Telescope Highlights The Moon, Venus, Jupiter, Mercury, Saturn, 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 very 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!

Written by Suzie Dills -- Night sky illustrations can be found following Starry Trail Map