



STARRY TRAILS

AUGUST 2018

If you have never been stargazing, August is the best month to head outside and look up!! This August will certainly be a phenomenal month for planet watching and stargazing! Here is what is in store for us: the four visible planets after sunset, the Perseid Meteor Shower and the Summer Milky Way!! Not to mention the spectacular sounds of summer!! Take a minute to listen! Now, let's check out the four visible planets that will visit our evening sky throughout August. About 30 minutes after sunset find a spot with a great western view. Dazzling Venus will stand out! Venus will pair up with the Crescent Moon on August 14th for a lovely site (Illustration 1). Turn left, or south, and bright Jupiter will greet you. As you continue to the left, the golden colored object is Saturn. Without a doubt as you scan further left, you will see Mars, the spectacular red, orange object (Illustration 2)!! I hope you get a chance to see all four planets!

Let's head out for our hike. Grab your Starry Trail map, bug spray, binoculars, light jacket and lawn chair or blanket. Our hike begins around 9:30pm in the western sky or where you see the beautiful sunset colors. Once again, Venus will catch your eye. As you journey up you will see a brilliant yellow, orange star, Arcturus. Above Arcturus you will see a semi-circle of stars. It looks almost like a necklace, but it is the Northern Crown or Corona Borealis. I think it looks like a smiley face! Right overhead, or up from Corona, will be a keystone shape in the stars. This is the body of Hercules, the bravest and strongest hero (Illustration 3)! Binocular time! Take your binoculars and scan around the part of Hercules facing Corona. Do you see a small fuzzy object? This is the finest Globular Star Cluster (M13) in the northern skies!

Return to Arcturus and turn slightly left. There you will spy Jupiter. Pick up your binoculars and focus 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. Trek left from Jupiter to a red-orange star, Antares, the heart of Scorpio. To the left of Antares is the constellation, Sagittarius, which looks more like a teapot (Illustration 4). Between Scorpio and Sagittarius is the best part of the sky to scan with your binoculars and telescope! It is rich with deep sky wonders! Grab your binoculars and look! Just above the teapot lid is Saturn, which is more of a golden color. Saturn is an incredible sight through a telescope! Mars is the spectacular object to the left of Saturn!!

Turn to the opposite part of the sky or north. The Big Dipper is beginning to swing down through the sky. Take the two stars at the end of the cup 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. Also, down and to the right of the Little Dipper is Queen Cassiopeia, the W-shaped constellation (Illustration 5).

Trek again to the right and you will be facing east. When looking up, you will see a very bright star, which is Vega. Journey down and to the left and you will come to Deneb. Now go right and you have reached Altair. When you connect these three bright stars you have made the Summer Triangle. Great job! Running through the Summer Triangle is the Milky Way, our galaxy! Pop open that lawn chair or lay out on your blanket.

Take your binoculars and scan through that part of the sky from north to south. See all of those stars?! Even if you cannot view the Milky Way, due to light pollution, you can still see so many stars with your binoculars! Here is a challenge: scan to the left and up of Altair. Do you see the group of stars that resemble an upside-down coat hanger? Cool!

Head back to Deneb. Imagine this to be the tail of Cygnus, the Swan. To the right will be three stars in a line. These would be the outstretched wings. You should also be able to see the long neck and head of the swan extending from the wings. The head of the swan would be directly below Vega. This star is Albireo, which is a beautiful double star through a telescope! If you look just below the Summer Triangle, you will see a group of stars that look like a kite. This is the constellation, Delphinus, the Dolphin (Illustration 6).

Now just relax and look up. August is the best month to see a shooting star. Anytime around the 12th you may be lucky enough to see a few shooting stars. The Perseid Meteor Shower will peak the night of August 12th. That is the best night to watch. This year we will have Moon free skies!! Give it a try and make a wish!

**Wow! What an unbelievable month of stargazing!
Next month... signs of Autumn.**

Highlights

Aug 4 – Last Quarter Moon.

Aug 11 – New Moon.

Aug 12 – **Peak of the Perseid Meteor Shower! Ideal Moon free skies!!**

Aug 14 – The Crescent Moon passes north of Venus.

Aug 17 – The Moon passes north of Jupiter.

Aug 18 – First Quarter Moon.

Aug 21 – The Moon passes north of Saturn.

Aug 23 – The Moon passes north of Mars.

Aug 26 – Full Moon. According to folklore it is the Full Corn Moon or the Full Grain Moon.

Brightest Stars: West – Arcturus, Spica. **East to Overhead** – Vega, Deneb, Altair. **South** – Antares.

Binocular Highlights: The Moon, Jupiter, Hercules Globular Star Cluster M13, Milky Way Deep Sky Objects to the left of Antares in Scorpio thru the Summer Triangle, The Coat Hanger.

Telescope Highlights: The Moon, Jupiter, Mars, Saturn, Albireo, M3, M4, M5, M6, M7, M8, M51, M39, M92, M13, M57, M81, M82, M10, M11, M12, M27, M15, M16, M17, M20, M21, M22, M23 and M25.

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Night Sky Illustrations created by Suzie Dills using Starry Night Backyard & Stellarium.

Illustrations courtesy of Cassandra Dills

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