



# ***STARRY TRAILS***

***MAY 2019***

Spring always brings renewed excitement for stargazers! Warmer weather and clearer skies are here! This month we will enjoy two special Lunar events. On the night of May 10, between 10 pm and 11 pm, the Crescent Moon passes through the middle of the Beehive star cluster (Illustration 1)! We will have a Blue Moon on May 18<sup>th</sup>! The true explanation of a Blue Moon is when we have four Full Moons in one season, the third is called a Blue Moon. We will continue to see Mars in the west after sunset (Illustration 2). Jupiter and Saturn shine in the southern predawn sky (Illustration 3).

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. Mars is the red, orange low in the evening sky. Above Mars, 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 4).

Trek to the right 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 5). Queen Cassiopeia, the W shape, is very low in the north or below the Little Dipper. Head back to the Big Dipper. Up and to the left, 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 left of Leo, almost to Gemini, the Twins. Do you see the beautiful Beehive Star Cluster (M44)?

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. 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 the part of Hercules that faces Corona. 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 6). Journey back to Arcturus. Look right and you will see a bright blue, white 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.

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

**Next month, signs of summer and our first views of Jupiter!!**

**Highlights:**

**May 2** – The Moon passes south of Venus in the predawn sky.

**May 4** – New Moon.

**May 6** – Eta Aquarid Meteor Shower peaks.

**May 7** – The Moon passes south of Mars.

**May 10** – The Moon passes through the Beehive star cluster.

**May 11** – First Quarter Moon.

**May 11**– National Astronomy Day!

**May 18** – Full Moon & Blue Moon. According to folklore it is the Full Flower Moon.

**May 20** – The Moon passes north of Jupiter in the predawn sky.

**May 22** – The Moon passes south of Saturn in the predawn sky.

**May 26** – Last Quarter Moon.

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

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

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

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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!