



Our 10th Anniversary
STARRY TRAILS

MAY 2021

Warmer weather and clearer skies are blooming! Our May evening skies feature the terrestrial planets, and the gas giants are featured in the predawn skies. Mercury puts on its best show of the year in May and reaches its highest western position on May 17th (Illustration 1). Venus' visibility improves in May. Venus and Mercury make a close pairing on May 28th, in the western sky (Illustration 2). Mars can be found in the western sky in the constellation Gemini, the Twins (illustration 3). Saturn and Jupiter can be found in the predawn southeastern sky (Illustration 4). We have a partial lunar eclipse on May 26th. Partial begins at 5:44 am, with maximum eclipse at 5:59 am. The eclipse ends at 6:02 am as the Moon sets.

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 5). Red-orange Mars can be found below Gemini, the Twins and in between Capella and Procyon.

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 6). Queen Cassiopeia, the W shape, is 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 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 7). 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!!

Highlights:

May 3 – The Moon passes south of Saturn in the predawn sky.

May 3 – Last Quarter Moon.

May 4 – The Moon passes south of Jupiter in the predawn sky.

May 5 – Eta Aquarid Meteor Shower peaks.

May 11 – New Moon.

May 12 – Venus & the thin Crescent Moon less than a degree apart, low in the west-northwest at dusk.

May 13 – Moon passes south of Mercury after sunset.

May 16 – The Moon passes north of Mars after sunset.

May 19 – First Quarter Moon.

May 26 – Full Supermoon. Closest Full Moon of the year. According to folklore it is the Full Flower Moon.

May 26 – Partial Lunar Eclipse. Begins at 5:44 am with the Moon setting at 6:02 am.

May 29 – Mercury & Venus less than 1 degree apart in the western sky 30 minutes after sunset.

May 30 – The Moon passes south of Saturn in the predawn sky.

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, Coma Berenice Cluster (in between Leo & Arcturus).

Telescope Highlights: The Moon, Mars, Venus, Mercury, 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!