

EAGLES EYE ON THE SKY – APRIL 2018

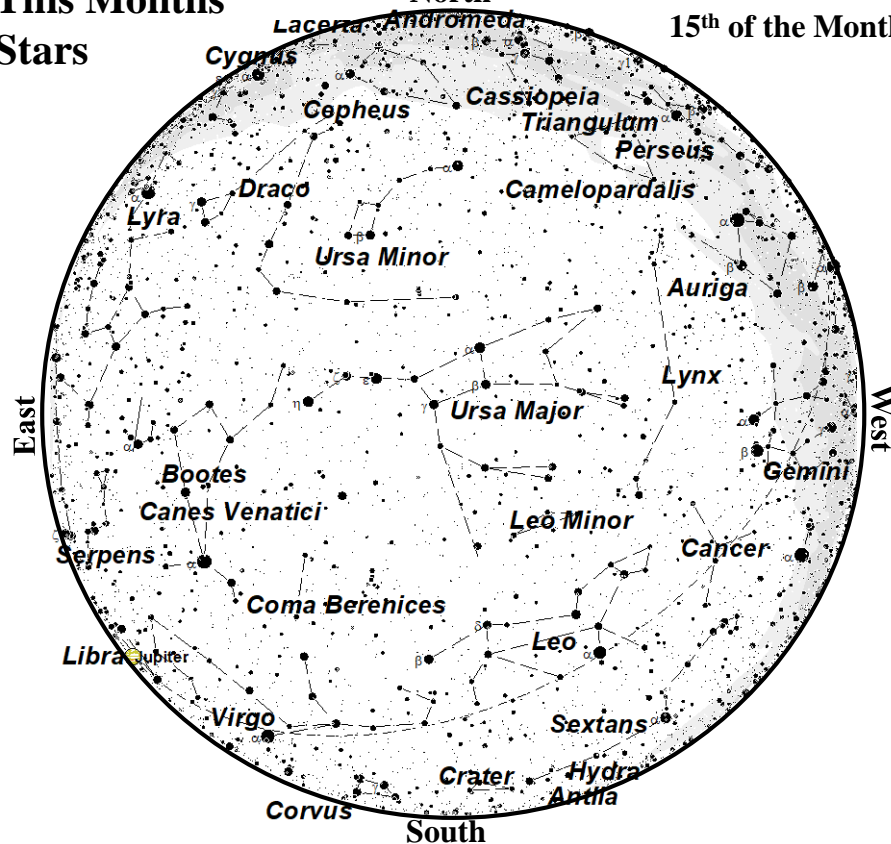
Dave Eagle's monthly sky guide.

This Months Stars

North

22:00 hrs

15th of the Month.



High overhead at this time of night are the bright seven stars of the Plough in Ursa Major. This area looks away from the plane of our Milky Way galaxy, so we are looking out onto a window into deep space, where many distant galaxies lie. The most famous is the Whirlpool Galaxy M51, which, lying almost overhead, is now at its best. With a large telescope and clear, dark skies, the spiral arms can be viewed. The galaxies abound in Leo and Virgo are high up in the southern sky, giving hours of viewing. But be careful as it is so easy to get lost amongst all the faint fuzzies that are populate this area of sky. In the western sky Orion & Taurus have almost set. In the eastern sky, Hercules and Lyra are starting to rise, with Cygnus lying on its side closer to the horizon. The nights are getting much lighter and shorter now, so make the most of what dark skies we have while you can.

THE MOON

Phases:

8th – Last Quarter.

16th – New.

22nd – First Quarter.

30th – Full Moon.

Thin Crescent Moon Visible:

11th & 12th – South east morning sky.

17th & 18th – Western evening sky.

The Moon will be close to:

Spica on the 1st & 29th.

Jupiter on the 3rd & 4th & 30th.

Vesta, Saturn & Mars on the 7th.

Venus on the 17th.

Hyades & Aldebaran on the 18th.

M35 on the 20th.

M44 (Praesepe) on the 22nd- 23rd.

Regulus on the 24th.

THE SOLAR SYSTEM

MERCURY – Reaches greatest inferior conjunction on the 1st. It moves quickly into the morning sky, but the shallow angle to the horizon means it stays extremely low until sunrise, so is unlikely to be seen.

VENUS – Visible low down in the western sky after sunset, moving slowly away from the Sun. It will be a little bit easier to see by the end of the month. The very thin crescent Moon guides the way on the evening of the 17th.

MARS – Now easily visible before dawn low in the southern sky. At magnitude +0.3 it is very bright, but still presents a very small challenging disk. Passing Saturn on the 2nd as it moves through the stars of Sagittarius,

JUPITER – Now rising well before midnight, visible in the eastern sky late evening. At magnitude -2.4 it is bright beacon, making a fantastic object to observe, even in a small telescope. Watch out for the cloud belts, red spot, the movement of the Galilean moons and their shadow crossings, as they jostle for position around this colossal gas giant.

SATURN – Visible low in the south eastern sky before dawn in Sagittarius. At magnitude 0.5 its rings are now very well displayed towards the Earth making a spectacular sight. Moon & Mars close by on the morning of the 7th.

URANUS & NEPTUNE – Both lost from view this month.

Comet C/2016 R2 (PanSTARRS) – Just past perihelion, this very interesting comet is about magnitude +12, passing through the south eastern part of Perseus during the month and into Auriga. It passes through the triangle of The Kids Asterism between the 22nd & 24th of the month. This comet has shown some very nice activity giving a few outbursts over the past few weeks, so it is brighter than predicted. It has also shown some really nice structure visible in the blue tail/s, so this comet is definitely one worth keeping an eye on.

LYRIDS – This meteor shower is active between the 18th and the 25th. Maximum on the 22nd. Get up in the early morning to enjoy Moon-free meteors of about 10 per hour.

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