

EAGLES EYE ON THE SKY – MAY 2017

Dave Eagle's monthly sky guide.

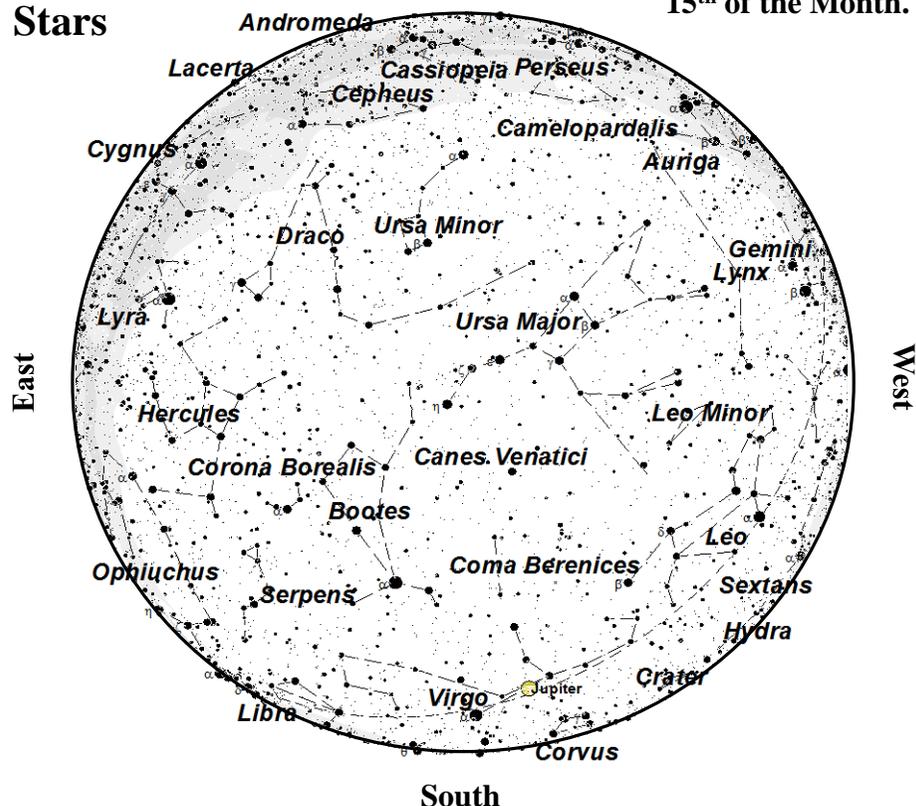
This Months

North

22:00 hrs

15th of the Month.

Stars



The tail of Ursa Major lies at the Zenith, follow the arc of the Plough's handle around to Arcturus which is almost at its highest in the south. Carry the spike around to the brightest star in Virgo, Spica, a bit lower in the south. The Virgo galaxy cluster beckons the intrepid galaxy hunter, but be careful you don't get lost amongst all those faint fuzzies. In the western sky Castor and Pollux have almost set, so the winter skies are definitely gone for another season. Over in the eastern sky, Lyra and Cygnus are rising, bringing the bright summer Milky Way with them. Pity the skies are so bright at this time of the year. Towards the north the distinct "W" shape of Cassiopeia is at its lowest, and never sets, being a circumpolar constellation.

THE MOON

First Qtr. – 3rd.

Full – 10th.

Last Qtr. – 19th.

New – 25th.

Crescent Moon visible:

23rd & 24th - Eastern morning sky.

27th & 28th - Western evening sky.

The Moon will be close to:

Praesepe open cluster (M44) on the 2nd.

Regulus on the 3rd, 4th & 31st.

Jupiter on the 7th.

Spica on the 8th.

Antares & Saturn on the 13th.

Saturn on the 14th.

Venus on the 23rd.

THE SOLAR SYSTEM

MERCURY – Reaches greatest western elongation of 26° on the 17th, but it will be difficult to spot low in the eastern morning sky just before sunrise

VENUS – After passing inferior conjunction last month, is now visible low in the eastern morning sky just before dawn. Very bright at magnitude -4 and showing a thick crescent phase when viewed through a telescope.

JUPITER – Just past last months opposition, Jupiter is still putting on a great show, just north of Spica. Watch for the constant jostling of the four Galilean Moons, Io, Europa, Ganymede and Callisto and great red spot transits.

SATURN – Now rising just after midnight will be at its highest in the south just before dawn breaks. It will stay low in the sky for the next few years. With the rings almost at their widest, they still make for a beautiful sight through even a small telescope.

URANUS – too close to the Sun to be seen this month.

NEPTUNE – Visible in the eastern morning sky in Aquarius, but will be difficult to make out in the brightening dawn, so save this one for later.

Comet 41P/Tuttle-Giacobini-Kresák – This bright periodic comet starts the month between Hercules and Lyra and heads south into Hercules. Was just below naked eye visibility, but is now fading after passing perihelion last month. It should be visible in a small telescope.

Comet C/2015 V2 (Johnson.) Moves from between Hercules into Boötes during the month, brightening as it approaches perihelion mid-June, so it should be at its brightest next month. Of course the brightness of a comet is never guaranteed.

Comet C/2017 E4 (Lovejoy) – Another corker from Terry Lovejoy. Just past perihelion it will be difficult from the UK as it heads south through Triangulum, ending up close to The Pleiades and Mars at the end of the month.

Comet C/2015 ER61 (PANSTARRS) – Reaches perihelion early in the month, but will be a very challenging object in the morning sky passing from Aquarius, into Pisces. Moves just north of Venus but never catches up with it, being further away from Earth and moving a lot slower against the background stars.

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