



The Universe from Here

May 2018 Newsletter

By nightrabbitastro@gmail.com

What's UP This Month?

May will be a great month for deep sky fanatics (like me) since we will have a waning moon early on, a new moon on May 15, and a full moon delayed until the 29th. This means... DARK SKIES! So without delay....

Planets: Venus remains prominent in the west at sunset. Jupiter rises shortly after sunset in the constellation Libra. It is at opposition on May 8, so get your astrophotography gear ready for some great views of the clouds and storms.

Saturn is next, just above the teapot of Sagittarius. Don't miss a chance to view Saturn through a telescope this month: it appears in the same 2 degree FOV with globular clusters NGC 6642 and M22. ____

Mars rises around midnight. At the beginning of May it is in Sagittarius with magnitude -0.4 and size 11", but by month's end it will have brightened to m -1.2, grown to 15", and moved into Capricornus. On May 14th Mars will make a close pass to globular cluster M75, appearing in the same field in a telescope.

Constellations, Stars, and Deep Sky: May is also the month of one of my favorite constellations *Corvus*. Just like the big dipper points to the way to several stars, *Corvus* points to some pretty cool deep sky objects!

Face directly south any evening this month and look for the trapezoid of stars about 40 degrees above the southern horizon. These are Kraz (beta), Algorab (delta), Gienah Corvi (gamma), and Minkar (epsilon).

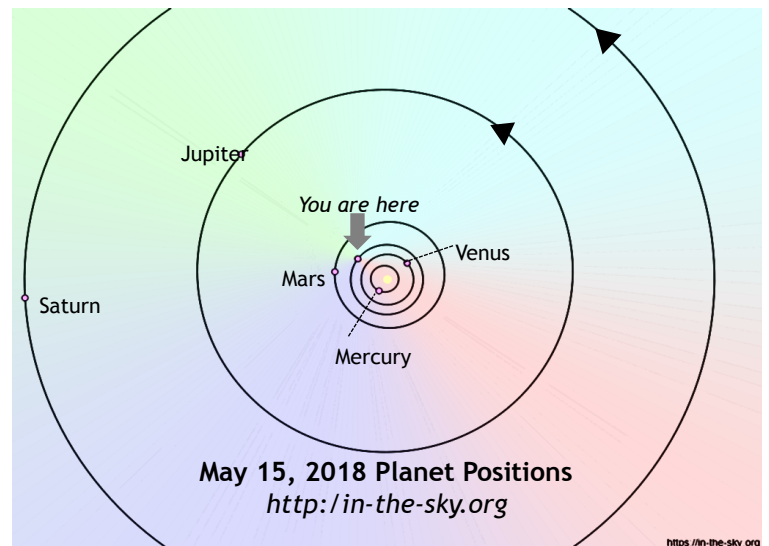
1. Follow a line from Algorab through Kraz and go just half the distance between the stars to find **M68**, a small, faint 7th magnitude globular cluster 33,000 light years away.

2. Continue on this line down towards the horizon (you will need an unobstructed view of the southern horizon to do this) until you reach a point 1/2 way between zeta and gamma *Centauri*, only 7 degrees above the horizon. In a telescope on low power, you will see a large, faint amorphous cloud somewhat lost in the horizon glow - this is **Omega Centauri (NGC 5139)**. Omega is the king of globular clusters: it is the most luminous globular cluster orbiting our galaxy and is so massive that it is thought to be the nucleus of a galaxy that collided with the Milky Way long ago. It is 17,000 LY away.

3. Now, draw a line diagonally from Minkar through Algorab to a point the same distance beyond Algorab. Start looking through a wide field lens until you find **M104** or the "Sombrero Galaxy." The reason for its name is obvious, even in small scopes. You are now 28,000,000 LYs from home.

4. Now proceed north from *Corvus* and find the "Spring Galactic Triangle," formed by Spica (*Virgo*), Arcturus (*Bootes*), and Denebola (*Leo*). If you missed it last month, you'll want to spend a few nights touring the **Virgo Cluster of Galaxies** which is located in the center of this triangle.

5. Continue further north on this same line, pass through *Coma Berenices* (who we visited last month) to 2 stars (*Cor Caroli* and *Chara*) in a line just past the zenith. This is the constellation *Canes Venatici*. Here you will find three beautiful galaxies: **M94, M63, and M51**. Each of these are spectacular views through a telescope. And just beyond them... *the big dipper!*



CAAA UP-dates

The night sky network has recognized the Clemson Area Astronomers for its support of the eclipse. Ram will present the award at the May meeting.

Ram and Stan will be teaching an astrophotography class at the Arts Center in Clemson. Ram will update on class details at the May 7 meeting.

Happy birthday to club member Ann! Her "birthday star" (based on the speed of light) is Tureis (Rho-Puppis), a 2.8 magnitude star at the top of Puppis (currently visible on the SW horizon at sunset).

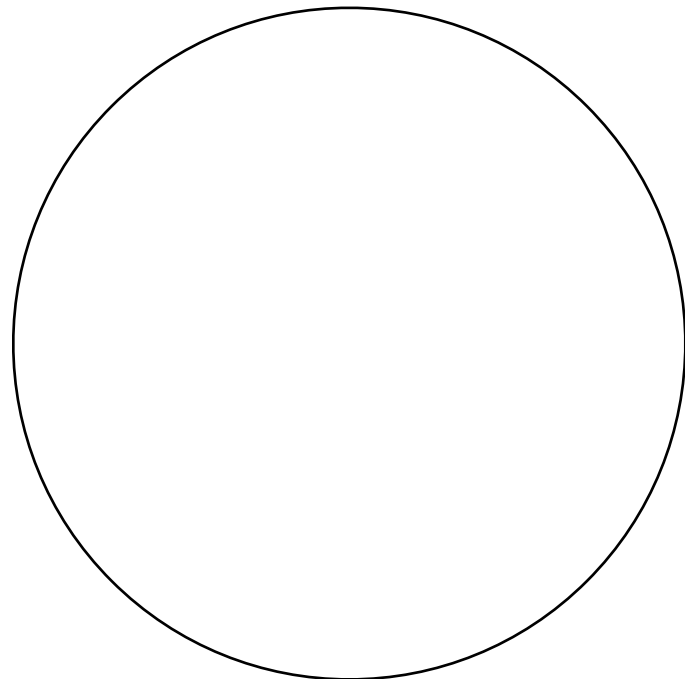
For more updates, details, and photos from club members, check out our updated website: <http://caaastro.com>. This newsletter and the monthly challenge can also be found on the site.

Please let me know if you have anything you would like to add to future newsletters: nightrabbitastro@gmail.com.

Unaided Eye 

- Venus at sunset all month
- Mars - Saturn - Jupiter “parade”
- Jupiter at opposition
- Using Corvus as a “pointer,” find the constellations Centaurus, Virgo, Coma Berenices, Canis Venetici, and Ursa Major!

Notes and Sketches 



Binoculars / Small Telescopes  

- Saturn-M22-NGC 6642 in the same field
- Mars and M75
- NGC 5139
- M68, M104
- The Virgo Cluster (yes, again! It’s worth it!)
- M94, M63, M51

