

Stargazing Guide: August 2019

What to look out for...

Constellations (star pictures) and interesting stars:

1 The Plough

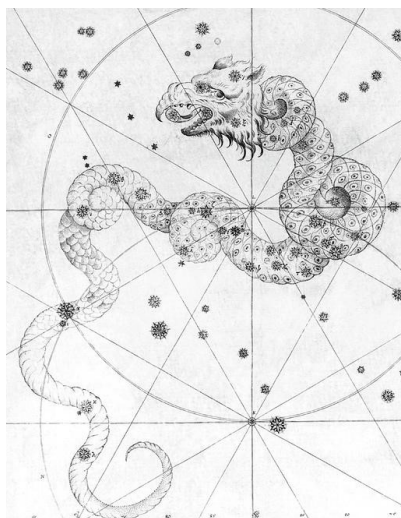
This well known pattern is the best place to start as it is so easy to find. You will find it high up in the northwest. The last two stars point to Polaris, which is part of ...



2 Ursa Minor (say urr-sir my-ner). The Little Bear.

Like a little squashed plough shape! His 'tail' star, Polaris, is special because it is seen in the same place in the sky at any time of day or year. This is because it happens to be above the North Pole.

Polaris is often called the North Star as it's always seen in the North.



3 Draco (say dray-co). The Dragon.

Snakey Draco doesn't have many bright stars so might be a challenge if there are lots of street lights around you. Find him winding across the sky between the Plough and Ursa Minor. Start by looking for his head; a triangle of three stars.

4 Hercules (say her-cue-lees)

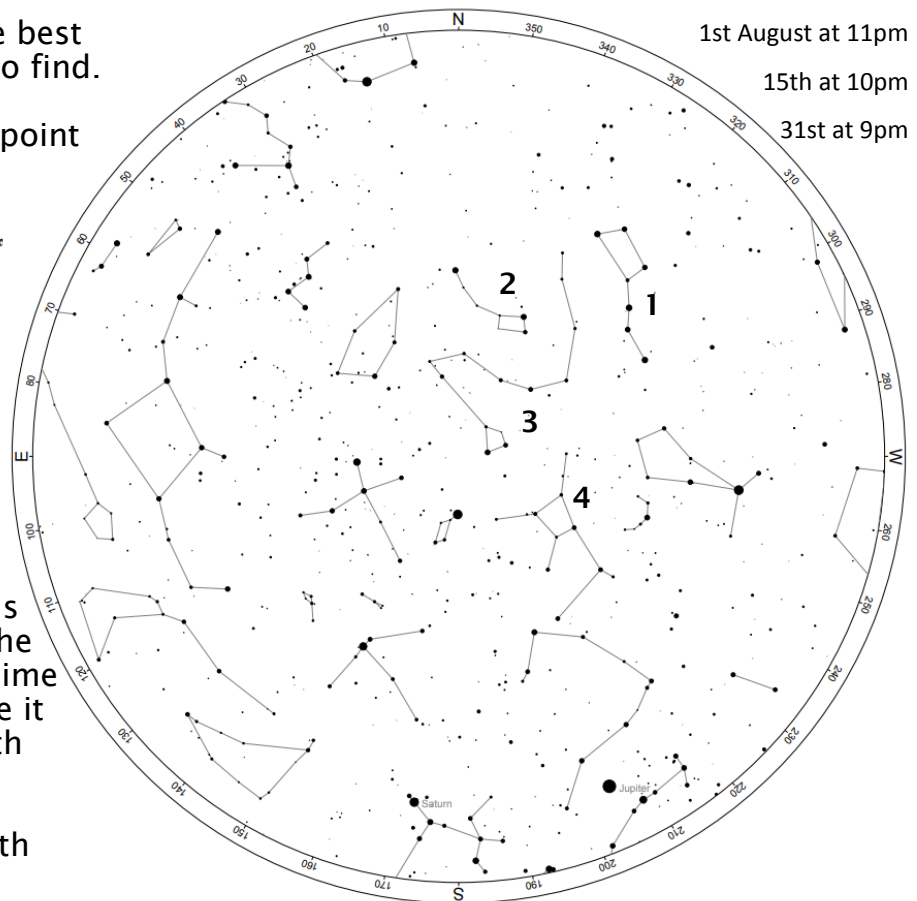
In Greek mythology, Hercules had to fight Draco to get a golden apple from a tree. Look first for the 'keystone' of four stars that form his torso, before trying to spot the star that marks his foot stamping on the dragon's head.

Map shows:

1st August at 11pm

15th at 10pm

31st at 9pm



How to use this chart:

Imagine the chart flat & upside-down above your head. The circle around the outside shows the horizon all around you. Turn the chart to have North (N), South (S), East or West at the front depending on which direction you are looking.

Stargazing Guide: August 2019



The Moon

Keep an eye on the Moon through the month to see what times it is in the sky. As it orbits the Earth in just 27 days, our view of it rapidly changes. Mark its position one day and compare at the same time the next day to get a feeling for how fast it travels.



Planets

Mercury starts the month ahead of the Sun rising shortly before towards the East, during the month it starts to rise earlier each day to begin with then appear to loop backward, rising later each day until it rises at the same time as the Sun.

Venus remains close to the Sun throughout the month and will be impossible to see.

Mars sets shortly after the Sun to start the month, setting earlier each day and appearing closer to the sun, by the end of the month it will be almost impossible as Mercury, Venus and Mars will all now be closely lined up with the sun

Jupiter and **Saturn** both rise before sunset and set before sunrise. They can be seen towards the Southern sky for most of the night. Throughout the month they stay in relatively similar locations throughout the month. They will appear either side of the Milky way in the sky. Jupiter is near the constellation Scorpius, and Saturn is near Sagittarius.

Using Binoculars

Albireo, the star marking the eye of Cygnus the Swan (see last month's guide for Cygnus) is actually two close stars of very different colours, a wonderful sight. Slightly defocus the binoculars and you will be able to see the colours more easily.

Shooting Stars!

The Perseid Meteor Shower will peak on the evening of 12th of August, but you can look for them anytime around this date. Go to the darkest place you can and see how many you spot. Later is better (and before dawn is best).

Meteors, often known as 'shooting stars' are made by little bits of rock vapourising as they fall down from space. Every year at this time the Earth in its orbit ploughs through a dusty trail left by a long-gone comet and so there are many more meteors than usually seen.

Tip of the Month

If you want to find more constellations, get a star map! Planisphere star maps are great for beginners, are simple to set for any date or time and can be used for many years.

Download this star guide and those for other months from:

<http://www.winchestersciencecentre.org/starguides>

Winchester Science Centre & Planetarium, Telegraph Way, Winchester SO21 1HZ.

Tel: 01962 863791, email info@winchestersciencecentre.org. Registered Charity No. 294582