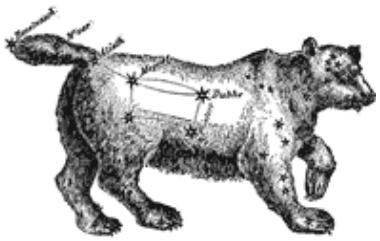
Stargazing Guide: April 2020

WINCHESTER SCIENCE CENTRE AND PLANETARIUM

What to look out for…

Constellations (star pictures) and interesting stars:

1 **The Great Bear** If you have very good eyes you might see the circled star as two stars… But there are actually six! Four are in the brighter 'star' (called Mizar), and two in the dimmer one (Alcor).



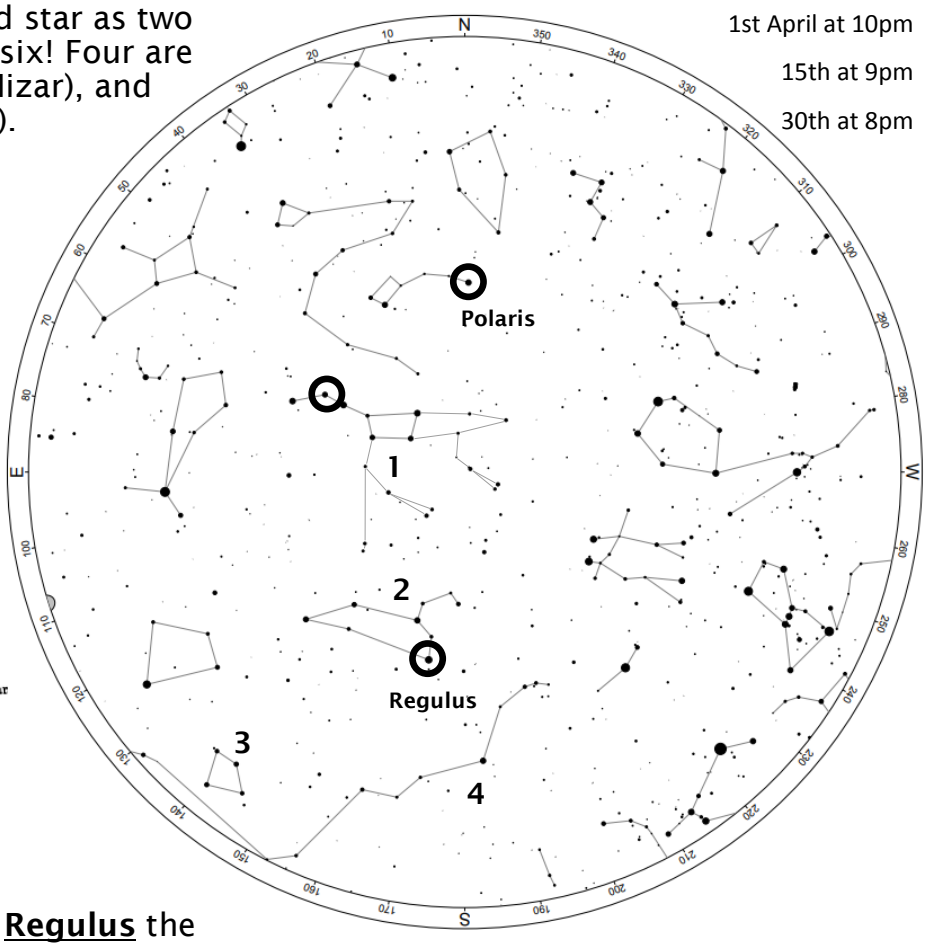
The Great Bear contains the well known pattern 'The Plough', the last two stars of which point to the North Star, **Polaris.**

Map shows:

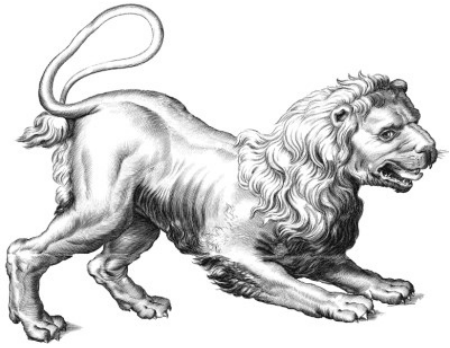
1st April at 10pm

15th at 9pm

30th at 8pm



2 **Leo** the lion. Look first for **Regulus** the King Star (the brightest star in this part of the sky), then find the backward question-mark that forms Leo's head and chest.



3 **Corvus** (say cor-vus) The crow. A strong kite shape of stars low in the sky.

4 **Hydra** (say Hi-druh) the water snake. It's enormous! Best seen at this time of year. However, it has few bright stars so is a real challenge to find. Give it a try on a dark, clear night, using Leo and Corvus to guide you.

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.

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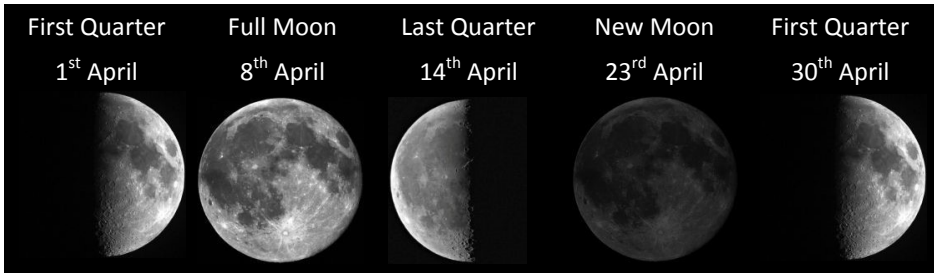
The Moon

The best time to look for the Moon this April is near the start of the month when it will be lit from the side.



When you see the Moon, compare it to the positions of nearby stars, or note down where it is in the sky and the time of day. By comparing your view on different days, you can get a feeling for its movement in orbit around the Earth.

Planets

Venus is visible each evening and can be seen in the South throughout the month once the sun sets. It will set each night before midnight.

Jupiter, **Saturn**, and **Mars** all rise before the Sun in the morning, rising slightly earlier each day. Jupiter always appears first in the sky, shortly flowed by Saturn then Mars. At the beginning of the month Mars as Saturn appear in almost the same location, but as the month goes on Mars seems to drop back from Saturn and Jupiter rising later than them with each day, Jupiter and Saturn appear to remain equidistant from each other throughout the whole month.

Mercury rises shortly before the Sun and remain close to the horizon the whole time making it tricky to spot.

Using Binoculars

When using binoculars, it's good to let them cool down outside before using them (this might take about 15 minutes). When putting them away, leave them inside to warm up and for any moisture to evaporate before putting the lens caps back on

Tip of the Month

You'll get your clearest view looking straight up, because there is less air in this direction to disrupt the light. Light coming from objects seen near the horizon has to travel further through the air, skimming sideways through the atmosphere rather than coming straight down. Starlight can appear to jump and twinkle as it passes through layers of air at different temperatures. Look out for how stars lower in the sky appear to twinkle more.

This added depth of air also explains why sunsets are red. The light from the Sun when it is near the horizon passes a long way through the air, during which time it loses the blue light (this 'lost' blue light is what lights up the daytime sky for people further to your west).

Download this star guide and those for other months from:
http://www.winchestersciencecentre.org/starguides

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