

# Dundee Astronomical Society

## Sky Notes for May 2017

Sky Map for 15<sup>th</sup> May 22:00

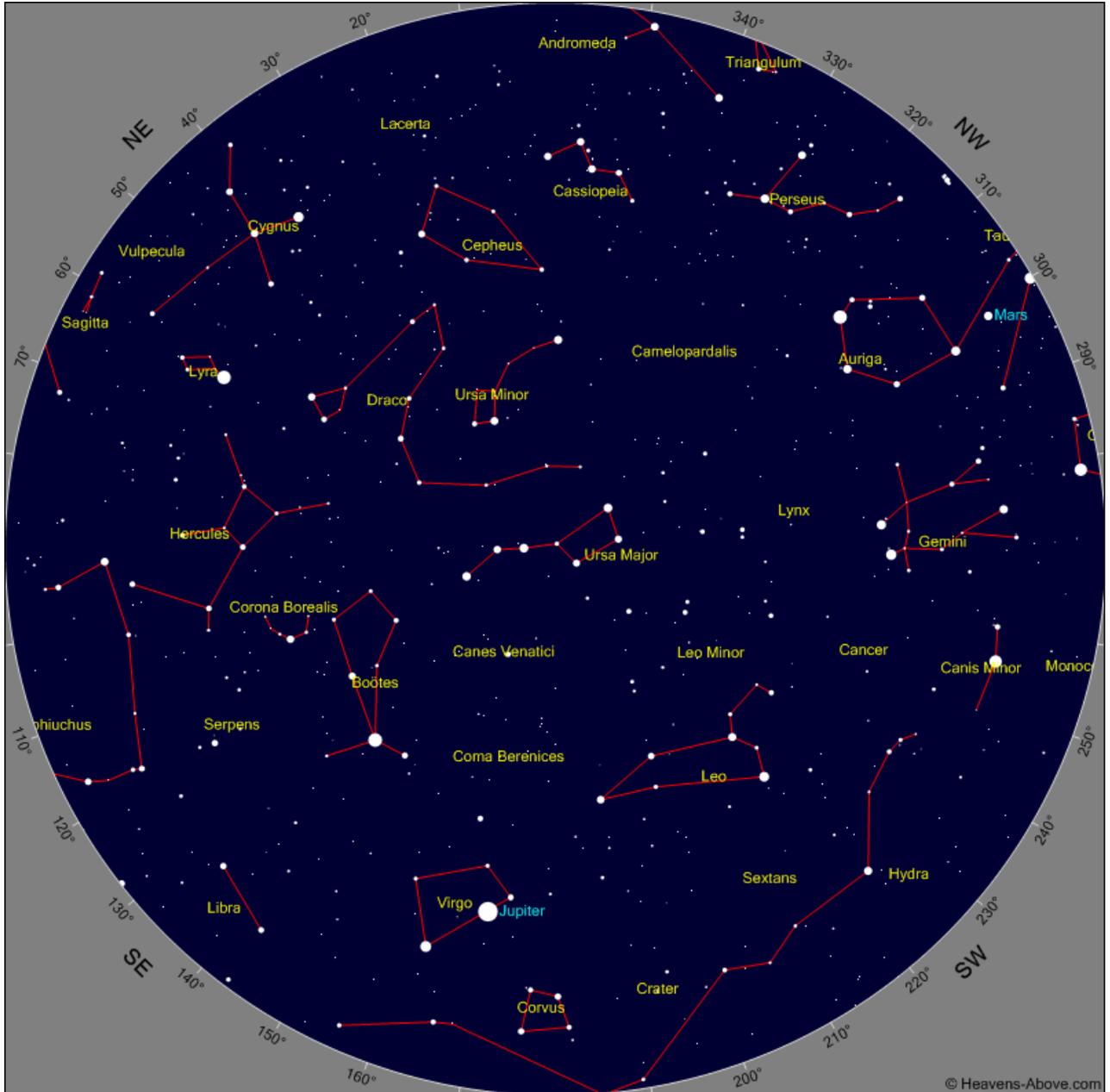


Illustration Courtesy of [www.heavensabove.com](http://www.heavensabove.com)

## The Planets

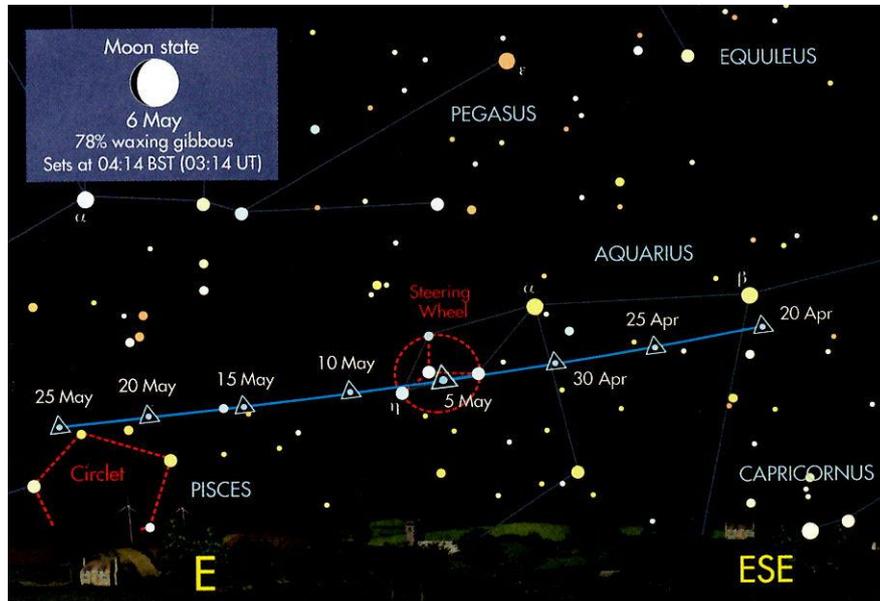
- Mercury** Not well placed this month for viewing, but reaching greatest Western Elongation on the 17<sup>th</sup>. Best time to observe end of the month around 03:20 UT in Aries.
- Venus** A bright morning object rising 90 minutes before the Sun by the end of the month.
- Mars** Still an evening object but low in the western sky, becoming lost in the dusk at twilight. Best time to observe around 1<sup>st</sup> May 22:00 UT.
- Jupiter** Good viewing at the start of the month but now losing it due to the longer days. Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> there is a double shadow transit of Io and Ganymede so watch out for this and pray the skies are clear. Look out from 18:30 UT on the 27<sup>th</sup> until 03:26 UT on the 28<sup>th</sup>.
- Saturn** Morning object situated in the teapot asterism in Ophiuchus 01:20 UT.
- Uranus** Not well positioned in the sky and mainly a daylight object.
- Neptune** Not visible this month.

## The Moon

- |               |                      |
|---------------|----------------------|
| First Quarter | 3 <sup>rd</sup> May  |
| Full Moon     | 10 <sup>th</sup> May |
| Last Quarter  | 19 <sup>th</sup> May |
| New Moon      | 25 <sup>th</sup> May |

## Meteor Showers

This month the ETA Aquirids meteor shower should be in full view with a ZHR of 50 meteors per hour. With the moon just leaving its first quarter, hopefully we should see a reasonable display. The Eta Aquarids is one of two meteor showers created by debris from Comet Halley. The Earth passes through Halley's path around the Sun a second time in October. This creates the Orionid meteor shower, which peaks around October 20. The Eta Aquarid meteor shower is usually active between April 19 and May 28 every year. This year, it will peak around May 5 or May 6. The best time to see shooting stars from the Eta Aquarid meteor shower is in the early morning, just before dawn.



### NLC's

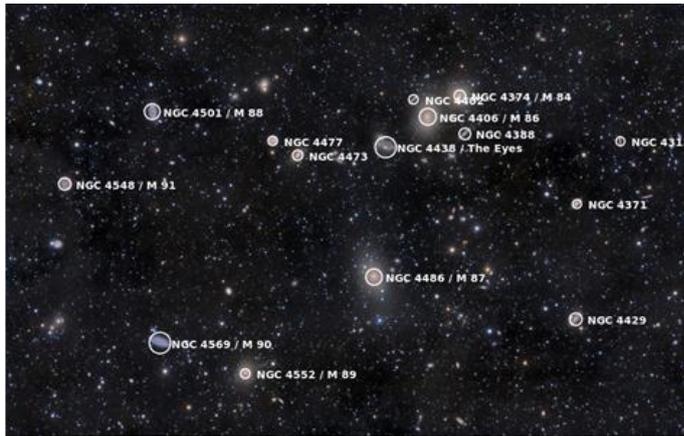
From the middle of the month, keep an eye open for Noctilucent Cloud displays. If you see any, and maybe had the good fortune to grab an image, send a report to Ken Kennedy and myself detailing date, direction, time (please tell us if UT or local) and location.

### Jim's Focus of the Month

For a change let's look at Virgo's Coma Cluster rather than the constellation itself. The bright star Spica makes it easy to locate Virgo, as it can be found by following the curve of the Big Dipper / Plough to Arcturus in Boötes and continuing from there in the same curve ("follow the arc to Arcturus and speed on to Spica"). The interesting point of Virgo for me is that it contains 16 Messier objects which means you will be able to observe several Messier objects without jumping around too much. Listed below are those in cluster going clockwise from the first one. If you have a Planisphere, this will make it easier to visualise.

M85	M100	M98	M99
M84	M86	M61	M49
M87	M58	M59	M60
M89	M90	M91	M88

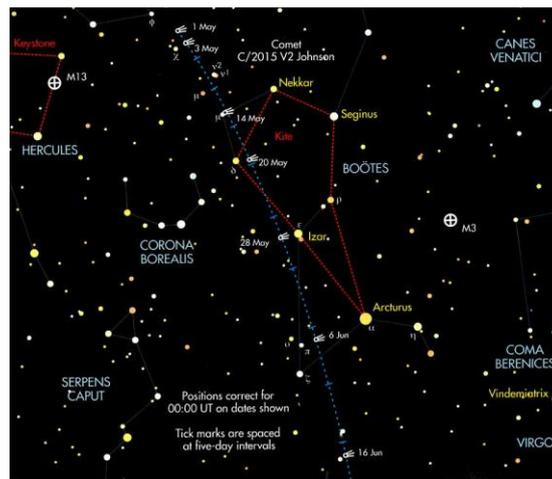
I am not going to include any specific images this time, just the generic one below, have some fun and enjoy.



The image above gives an insight of the Coma Cluster showing the approximate central region.

**Comet Spotting** There is a good opportunity this month to catch two comets, C/2015 V2 Johnson and 71P/Clark.

Comet Johnston moving through Bootes, reaches peak predicted magnitude of +6.37 at the end of the month and should be visible using binoculars, whilst Comet Clark moving through Scorpio, with a magnitude of +12.6 (brightening to +11.8) throughout the month. See detail below courtesy of Sky at Night Magazine.



Have a go and see if you can observe these Comets. Please let us know if you are successful.

### **This month's Challenge**

- 1 **Do not attempt this one if you do not have a properly protected scope or Binoculars.** Look at our nearest star, the Sun, and count the number of sunspots you see, make a sketch or image them and share them with us.
- 2 The 1<sup>st</sup> is an appropriate time to see the Libration of the Moon. This is where slightly more of the moon can be seen this time on the eastern limb due the Moon having a slight wobble.

### **Did You Know?**

1 <sup>st</sup> May 1966	USSR's Venera 3 reaches Venus' surface, becoming the first spacecraft to land on another planet.
18 <sup>th</sup> May 1965	Alexi A. Leonov becomes the first Astronaut to walk in space.
27 <sup>th</sup> May 1969	Mariner 7 was launched towards Mars.
29 <sup>th</sup> May 1974	Mariner 10 makes its first flyby of Mercury and transmits the first pictures of the planet back to NASA.

*Jim Barber*

**Director of Observations**

**Dundee Astronomical Society**