Dundee Astronomical Society

Sky Notes for April 2017

Sky Map for 15th April 22:00 UT

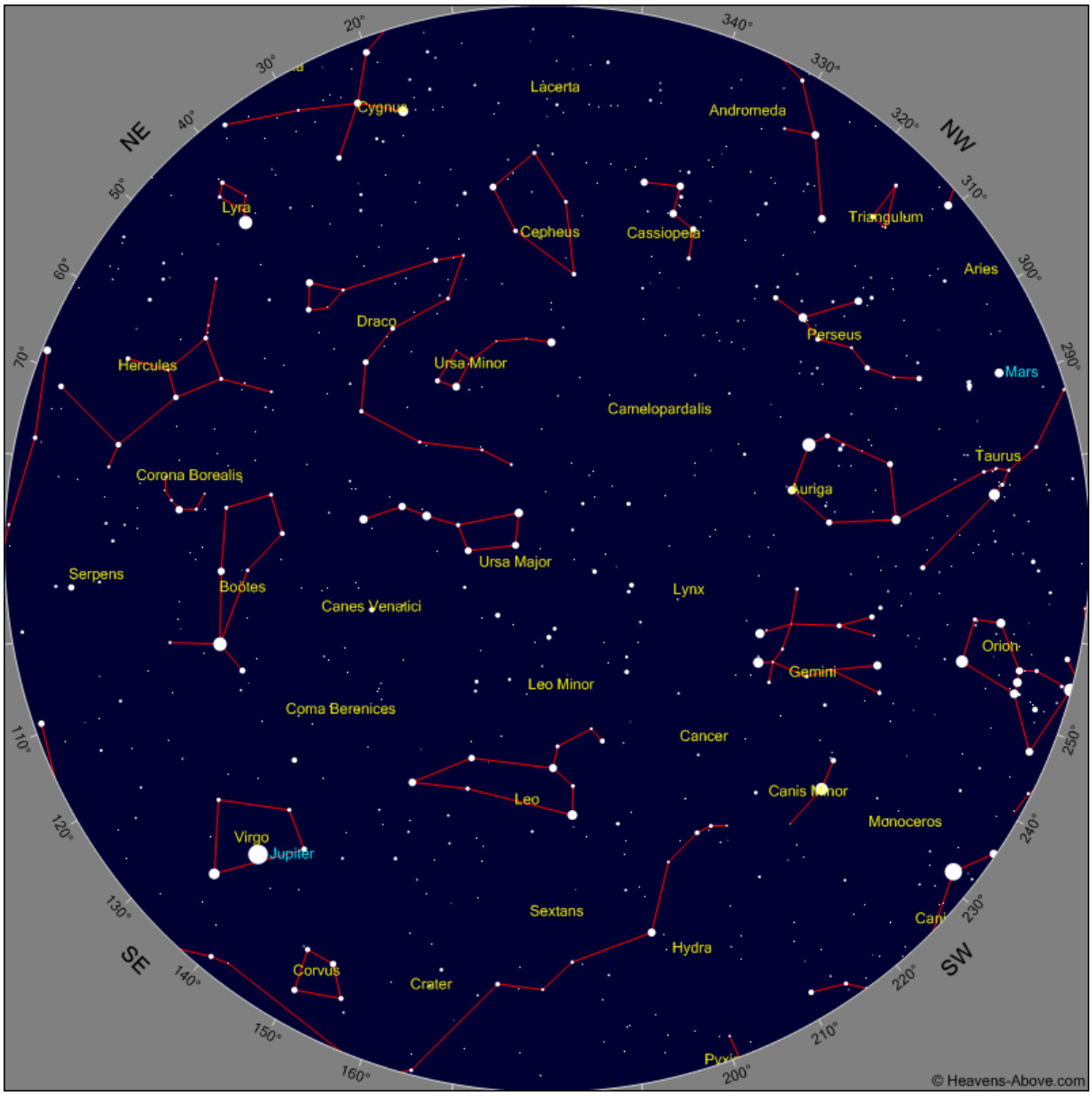


Illustration Courtesy of www.heavensabove.com

The Planets

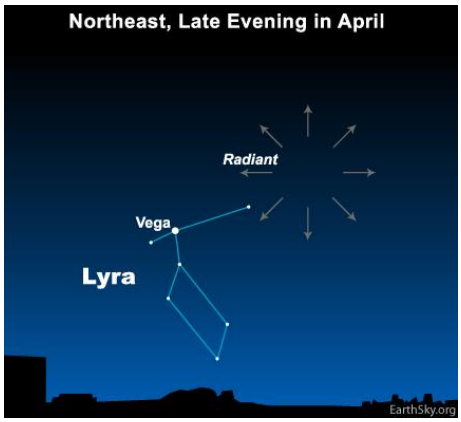
Mercury	At greatest elongation on the 1st, but not visible after the 10th.
Venus	A Morning object best seen around the 12th of the month
Mars	Still visible during the evening but not well placed for viewing.
Jupiter	Reaches opposition on the 7th which is probably the best time to view. Watch for the moon as it appears close on the 10th. On the 7th of the month Ganymede and its shadow transits between 1830 and 2055 UT.
Saturn	Although still a morning planet, its rings are nicely presented.
Uranus	Not visible this month, but in conjunction with the Sun on the 14th.
Neptune	Unfortunately not visible this month

The Moon

First Quarter	3rd April
Full Moon	11th April
Third Quarter	19th April
New Moon	26th April

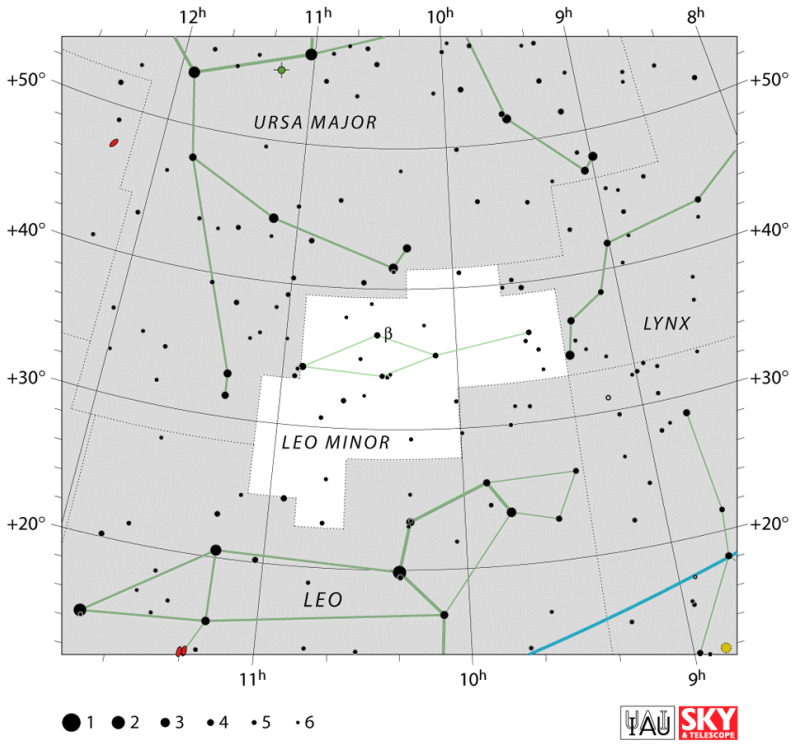
Lyrids Meteor shower.

The Lyrids is an average shower, usually producing about 20 meteors per hour at its peak. It is produced by dust particles left behind by comet C/1861 G1 Thatcher. The shower runs annually from April 16-25. It peaks this year on the night of the 22nd and morning of the 23rd. These meteors can sometimes produce bright dust trails that last for several seconds. The crescent moon should not be too much of a problem this year so skies should still be dark enough for a good show. Best viewing will be from a dark location after midnight. Meteors will radiate from the constellation Lyra, but can appear anywhere in the sky.



Jim's Focus of the Month

Leo Minor – Leo Minor belongs to the Ursa Major family of constellations, along with Boötes, Camelopardalis, Canes Venatici, Coma Berenices, Corona Borealis, Draco, Lynx, Ursa Major and Ursa Minor. The constellation's name means "the smaller lion" in Latin.



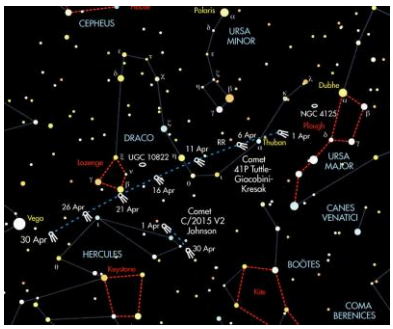
Although Leo Minor does not have any Messier objects associated with it, it does have many other NGC objects within its boundaries, some of which are depicted below-

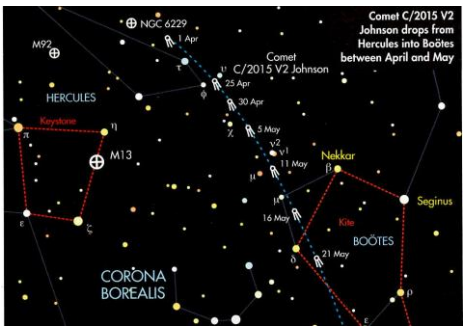
NGC 3432 Sometimes known as the Knitting Needle Galaxy. It lies 3 degrees southeast of the star 38 Leonis Minoris and appears almost edge-on. It can be observed in amateur telescopes. The galaxy has an apparent visual magnitude of 11.67 and is about 42 million light years distant from the solar system.

NGC 3021 is a spiral galaxy with a visual magnitude of 10.88, located at an approximate distance of 100 million light years away. The galaxy occupies an area of 1.6’ by 0.9’ in size. A supernova, SN 1995al, was discovered in the galaxy in 1995.

Comets this month

Lock out for these this month, hopefully the skies clear and we will have a good view with Bino’s and telescopes





This Month’s Challenge

1 Observe the major satellites of Jupiter and draw or photograph them then identify which each of them are. You can also follow this on consecutive nights and note (draw) how the positions of the Galilean Moons change from night to night.

2 Look for and identify the Winter Triangle, this consists of Betelgeuse, Procyon and Sirius. Identify in which Constellation each star is a resident. Image if you can and make a report.

3 Look for and find M110, a Dwarf Elliptical Galaxy very close to M31. M110 with a magnitude of + 8.07 will require binoculars or a small to medium scope. Make a sketch and send to myself or the web Master for inclusion on the website.

4 Finally observe Pollux and try to resolve its companion double star.

As the nights are now getting shorter, "The Challenge" will continue (by popular demand) but with less challenges.

Did you Know

4th April 1983	First flight of space shuttle Challenger.
6th April 1965	Intelsat (Early Bird), first geostationary commercial communications satellite launched.
19th April 1971	Salyut 1, first space station launched by USSR.
24th April 1990	Space shuttle Discovery launched, deploying the Hubble Space Telescope.

Jim Barber

Director of Observations

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