

APRIL - MAY 2012 NITE SKY

Moon Phases: New 4/21, FQ 4/29, Full 5/5, LQ 5/12, New 5/20, FQ 5/28.

Events: 4/20 7 PM, KVAS Meeting/Clay Center, 4/30 Greatest Venus illum., 5/18 7:30 PM. KVAS Meeting, Hansford Sr. Center, 5/20 sunset partial annular eclipse.

HERCULES (HER-ku-leez) the strong warrior and half mortal son of Jupiter performed many great feats. Jupiter made him a god and he became one of the best northern summer constellations. Most outstanding is the Hercules Globular Cluster M13 with 16 arc minute diameter, 5.9 magnitude and 23,000 light years distant. Its globular companion M92 is a little smaller and dimmer. Use at least a 10" telescope to resolve fine details in the clusters. Two planetary nebulae are NGC 6210, bright blue with 18 arc seconds across and 9 magnitude and IC 4593. The 4 stars of the Keystone provide the easiest way to locate the constellation but Ras Algethi (Alpha) is also spectacular as a very red super giant star of magnitude 3.1 to 3.9 and a visual green double of 5th magnitude, 5 arc seconds away.

CORONA BOREALIS (kor-OH-nah bor-ee-At-is) The Northern Crown is easy to find since it is between the Keystone and Bootes. The highlight is Abel 2065 galactic clusters, but you need at least a 16" scope to see them. R & T are unusual irregular stars and Eta is a bright very close binary with a 41.6 yr period, a 5.0-combined magnitude and a one arc seconds separation.

SERPENS CAPUT (SIR-penz KA-put) The Serpent's head contains one of the best globular cluster M5, about 26,000 light years away, 17.4 arc minutes and 5.7 magnitude. The Delta star is a 4th magnitude binary with a 5th magnitude mate 3.9 arc seconds away. NGC 6027 is a galaxy group (Stephan's Sextet) that is a challenge for a 12" scope.

SCORPIUS (SKOR-pee-us) The Scorpion features two large bright open clusters, M6 and M7, which are almost in the same field with large binoculars. Also, two great globular clusters are M4, a beautiful but rather strange one, best for small scopes and M80 which is small and bright, but needs a 10" scope. Antares is a classic red super giant star. Beta is a double with 13.7 arc seconds that can be resolved with a 2" scope or giant binoculars. A half-degree from Zeta is another open cluster, NGC 6231, which is best seen with binoculars.