

On May evenings, well up in the southern sky and overhead, you can see a circle of prominent constellations with three first-magnitude stars as well as a bright planet. They have replaced the even more brilliant display that you saw in the wintertime.

In the southwest, about halfway from horizon to zenith, stands one of these groups—Leo, the lion. To the right are six stars of different brightnesses in the shape of a sickle. Regulus, the brightest star, is below at the end of the handle. The blade of the sickle, pointing toward the southwest, supposedly forms the lion's head. West of the sickle, in neighboring Cancer, is the planet Saturn, about twice as bright as Regulus. It sets at about midnight.

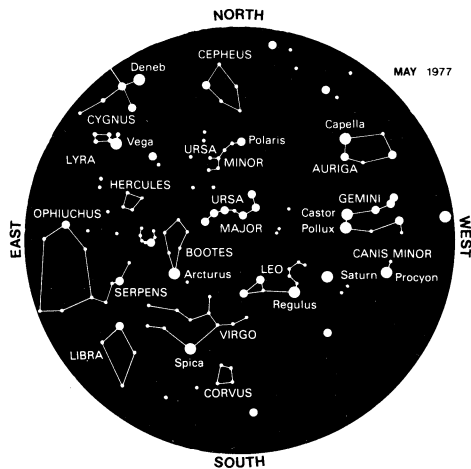
Look for Virgo to the left of Leo. This is the second largest constellation in terms of the sky area that it covers. Its brightest star, Spica, is first magnitude, but the rest are third magnitude or fainter. North of Virgo is Boötes, with brilliant Arcturus. This is one of the five brightest stars in our nighttime sky.

What is perhaps the most familiar group of stars, even though none is as bright as the first magnitude, is now at its highest evening position of the year, a little north of the zenith. This is the Great Dipper, part of Ursa Major. A quadrangle of stars toward the west is the bowl and a curved line of three to the east make the handle, which is directed toward Boötes.

Gemini, whose brightest star is Pollux, is low in the west. Even lower and a little to the left look for Procyon in Canis Minor. And near the northwestern horizon is Auriga, with Capella. All these stars

MAY STARS

BY JAMES STOKLEY



To use star map hold over head with directions oriented as indicated.

May 3	9:03 am EDT	Full Moon
4	1:00 am	Moon nearest
10	12:08 am	Moon in last quarter
11	7:00 pm	Venus at greatest brilliancy
14	7:00 am	Moon north of Venus
	8:00 am	Moon north of Mars
17	10:51 pm	New Moon
18	2:00 pm	Moon farthest
24	7:00 am	Moon south of Saturn
25	11:20 pm	Moon in first quarter

are dimmed, because they are so low, where our atmosphere absorbs much of their light. On winter evenings they shine high overhead, where such absorption is minimal.

A similar effect occurs with Deneb in Cygnus, near the northeastern horizon, and also with Vega in Lyra, a little higher and to the right. However, Vega is so brilliant that even when dimmed it still equals a first-magnitude star. Low in the southeast Scorpius rises during the May evenings. As it climbs higher during the night the red star Antares gains increasing prominence. On summer evenings Antares is prominent in the south.

A little lower than Spica and toward the right is Corvus, a small constellation of fainter stars, shaped like the main sail of a ship. As seen from 40° north latitude it is about 30° above the southern horizon when highest. Almost directly south of it is the Southern Cross, which appears on the flag of Australia, New Zealand and other countries of the Southern Hemisphere.

During early May, Jupiter will be very low in the west just after sunset and will hardly be visible. By the end of the month it will be very close to the sun, behind which it passes on June 4.

Venus rises nearly two hours ahead of the sun and is at greatest brilliancy on May 11, so you should be able to see it low in the east at dawn. It will be close to the crescent moon May 14, making an interesting sight. In fact, from some parts of western North America the edge of the moon will actually pass in front of Venus. Astronomers call such an event a lunar occultation. □

● **May 4 (PBS) NOVA—"The Red Planet"** traces the 300-year-old quest for knowledge of Mars from the beginning of astronomy to the NASA Viking missions.

● **May 11 (PBS) NOVA—"Tongues of Men, Part 1: Disaster at Babel."** The human species uses between four and five thousand different languages. This two-part program examines how and why this bewildering confusion of languages came about.

● **May 17 (PBS)—"This Britain: Heritage of the Sea"** originally scheduled for April 19 (see SN: 3/26/77, p. 206) has been rescheduled to be aired on this date.

● **May 18 (PBS) NOVA—"Tongues of Men, Part 2: A World Language?"** looks at the consequences for mankind of a universal language.

● **May 24 (PBS)—"The Key to the Universe"** is a two-hour special report about the startling achievements this past year by physicists and astrophysicists toward understanding the laws of the universe.

● **May 25 (PBS) NOVA—"A Desert Place"** travels to the Sonoran desert of the American Southwest to discover the success life has had in coping with the climatic ex-

MEDIA

SCIENCE NEWS prints the latest written word of scientific developments and noteworthy news. We've set this space aside to inform our readers of programs of scientific interest that are scheduled on the broadcast media. Check your local listings for exact times.



NOVA/"A Desert Place"

tremes and harsh conditions of the desert.

● **"DES Daughters and Sons"** (PBS) is a two-part program about what has happened to the children of an estimated six million women who took the routinely prescribed drug DES during their pregnancies. Part 1: May 12; Part 2: May 19.

FREE TROPICAL FISH CATALOG

RIGHT NOW our \$1 catalog of aquarium fish & over 500 low-cost pumps, filters, lights, etc., is **FREE** if you phone 313-627-2877 & ask for it. Mailed at once. Operators are standing by. If you MAIL us your request, please enclose 50¢ to pay for paperwork/handling. But act **NOW** for free catalog because full \$1 charge may have to be made after month shown on this publication's cover.

Act NOW Aqua Discount, Box 1-E, Ortonville, Mich. 48462

Circle No. 121 on Reader Service Card

Microprobe THERMOMETERS

We make 14 thermometers, with digital or meter readout. All read in 2 secs, are extremely easy to use. Simply apply probe — read temperature.

Unbreakable probes are steel sheathed including World's Smallest Microprobe, 0.01" dia.

Models: BAT-4 BIOLOGICAL, BAT-5 CRYOGENIC, BAT-7 INDUSTRIAL, BAT-8 DIGITAL "C" or "F", TH-2 CLINICAL

The Modern Way to Measure

BAILEY INSTRUMENTS INC.
Saddle Brook, N.J. 07662 • (201) 845-7252

Circle No. 123 on Reader Service Card