

CAROLINA SKIES APRIL - MAY 2019

Hold the star chart over your head. Find north, and align your chart accordingly. You may need a flashlight, but be sure not to ruin your night vision with a bright bulb. Use a red light, or put a brown paper bag over your flashlight for a muted glow.

Begin your sky tour with the Big Dipper. The Dipper's "pointer stars" can guide you to Polaris, the North Star. The Dipper's handle also "arcs" toward the orange star Arcturus, where you can "speed on to Spica." Can you curve on to Corvus? South of the Dipper (and its constellation Ursa Major, the Big Bear) you can find the backward question mark forming Leo the Lion's head and mane.

Reddish **Mars** graces our early evening western sky. It sinks below the horizon a little before midnight. Expect to see **Jupiter** rising in the east as Mars sinks into the west, or within an hour or so afterwards. The giant planet is then followed a couple of hours later by a rising **Saturn**. And as Jupiter and the ringed planet trek toward the western sky in the wee hours, a brilliant luminary in the form of **Venus** peeks above the eastern horizon, suspended within the glow of pre-dawn twilight. A horizon-hugging **Mercury** floats just below and to the left of Venus until May, when it disappears entirely into the morning solar glare.

Our **Star Families** series for families with children ages 7-12 continues with "Spring Skies" (April 27). The 7th annual **N.C. Statewide Star Party** happens April 12 and 13, 2019; find a Star Party event near you at <http://ncsciencefestival.org/starparty>

Skywatching Sessions:

If you liked your *Carolina Skies* planetarium experience, consider joining us to view the real sky! For information on Morehead's free monthly public skywatching sessions please check our web page: www.moreheadplanetarium.org/skywatching

Admission to skywatching is free, telescopes are active, and constellation tours are provided. Sessions will be cancelled if weather is poor. For directions to the skywatching sites, cancellation updates, and information on astronomy and skywatching classes for children and adults, visit www.moreheadplanetarium.org, or call (919) 962-1236.

