

# CAROLINA SKIES APRIL - MAY 2021

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.

Ruddy planet **Mars** shines post-sunset in the west. Don't confuse it with nearby orangey-reddish stars Aldebaran and Betelgeuse, also in that part of the sky. Unlike stars, Mars and the other planets are distinguished by their lack of discernable twinkling, an atmospheric-induced effect. In early May, Mars is joined low in the west soon after sunset by **Mercury** and brilliant **Venus**. The latter two form a particularly tight pairing on the 28<sup>th</sup>. The pair set by 9 to 10 p.m. and are followed to the horizon by Mars around midnight. **Jupiter** and ringed **Saturn** dominate the southeastern morning sky before sunrise. Yellowish Saturn is higher and to the right of brighter Jupiter.

Join us for the annual **North Carolina Science Festival!** During April, partners around the state are offering hundreds of science events, including more than 35 Statewide Star Party virtual and in-person events. Find events that fit your calendar at [www.ncscifest.org](http://www.ncscifest.org)

## Skywatching Sessions:

After it's safe to gather in person again, we'll be back with our free public monthly skywatching sessions.

<http://moreheadplanetarium.org/skywatching>

