

THE STARRY SIDE Spring

BY GREELEY WELLS

See the buds, feel the warmth, smell the green, Daffodils have broken through at my place at this writing at February's end. It's spring! Dear renewing Spring. In the night sky the loud and raucous proliferation of stars is setting in the west as the sentinel, Sirius, bright in the west dominates. Gone are Taurus and Orion, only his faithful dog remains. The stars are fainter, the sky quieter with large areas of almost nothing going on. It's because in spring we stand on the milky way below and around us at the horizon line. But don't worry it's about to tip up again in the east, its sentinel is already there in the northeast: Vega the bright star in the little constellation Lyra. It's the leading edge of the summer triangle, soon Deneb and finally Altar will follow. But summer is just a hint. Spring does have it's star and constellation magnificents. Cassiopeia is under the north star now. Then moving up from her is the Little Dipper whose tail or handle's end is the north star. Next going upward is the huge Big Dipper and over it all and past the zenith of the sky is Leo the Lion. Notice that the Big Dipper pointers work both ways. From them you can find the north star by going down. By going up or overhead they point to Leo. This set has been rising and it will be the main sight for this season. Remember you can "follow the arch" of the dipper's tail and it will lead to Arcturus and keep going in roughly the same arch and find Spica. Arcturus is in Bootes made of not too bright stars and off to the east is one of my favorites: Corona Borealis a neat little "C" shape that is very distinctive though not very bright. And since I'm a Virgo that's another reason I like Spica, a rather shapeless maiden who holds an ear of wheat in her hand. No I've never really figured her out. But she is large and dim with Spica standing alone. I told you the spring sky was dim, that large southern exposure a case in point.

As the season ticks on, like the clock that it is, the whole eastern horizon, well into the north and south, will be aglow with the milky way. The darker your sky the greater the show. By June the summer triangle in all it's glory will grace this bright river of light with many bright stars. We'll concentrate on these for the summer discussion. In May in the southwest setting soon is the bright Capella in Auriga, what I think of as a five-sided kite with two tiny triangles straddling two sides. Almost due west and side by side are the Gemini twins: Caster and Pollux, the very last of winter's stars. They stand parallel with the sunset and fade into it as May turns into June.

THE PLANETS

Mercury, the ever elusive planet, has it's best show this year in April and in easy evening sight. Look about mid month in the west-northwest at sunset. On the 26 a two-day-old moon hangs just to the left of Mercury with the Pleiades between them - gorgeous! With optical aid it's a crescent shape and easy to see in the sunset light (always the best time to look at planets). Mercury will

be found in the midst of the Pleiades on May 15 and again on June 15. In May Mercury fades towards the sunset and is gone on or about the May 18.

Saturn is high in the south at sunset and remains for the night the one visible planet of April. The ring system is narrow for those looking closer and then open a little at month's end. In May Saturn is still high in the south but setting at around 3 am. On the May 17 Saturn stops it's westward drift and begins moving eastward against the background stars for the rest of the year. June is Saturn's swan song. It starts the evening lower and lower in the southwest and ends the evening with setting by 1 am on June 15. It'll be completely gone by September. Also leaving are the rings.

Jupiter is rising 2-1/2 hours before the sun in our April dawn sky, Mars and Venus are there too. On April 19 Jupiter is quite near the moon. As Saturn sinks in the west Jupiter rises in the in southeast in May. June's Jupiter rises around midnight.

Venus rises due east about 50 minutes before the sun at dawn beginning the month. On April 22 the moon occults (hides) Venus at about 5:18 am! And that's Mars (a dim pin point) looking on from below and off to the right Jupiter watches it all. By May 10 and into June, Venus rises two full hours before dawn and is the predominate, bar none, dawn "star." Venus and Mars get closer in June and on into July.

Mars moves up and closer to Venus all April, in our dawn sky. On May 21 Venus, Mars and a beautiful crescent moon make a nice triangle in the dawn sky. Mars is still hard to see as it's blown out by the dawn's light. On June 15 Mars emerges from dawn's twilight and Venus and Mars drift together. Notice Mars just upper left of Venus and below a crescent moon on the June 19 in the dawn.

OF SPECIAL NOTE

April 22 shows us the Lyrid meteor showers, they seem to radiate from the southwest near Vega in early evening and move into the morning sky by midnight. There may be a dozen or so meteors per hour, not a big shower.

May has it's Eta Aquarid showers. On the early morning of May 6 in the east is the radiant. It's a little better than the Lyrid's but with a full moon which always impinges on the smaller meteors.

The crescent moon grazes the Pleiades on April 26 in the western sky.

April's full moon is on April 9 and is called the Egg, Grass, Easter or Paschl Moon. May's full moon is May 9 and called the Milk Moon or Planting Moon. June's full moon is on the June 7 and is called the Flower, Rose or Strawberry Moon.

May your night skies be dark and warm and the meteors many!

Greeley Wells • 541-840-5700
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Williams Creek Watershed Council and Williams Elementary School's Salmon Egg Program receives grant funding

The Williams Creek Watershed Council (WCWC) is grateful to have recently received a grant from the Cow Creek Umpqua Indian Foundation to support the Williams Elementary School "Salmon Egg Program." Now in its sixth year, this program provides an opportunity for students to learn about the life cycle of salmon that live in our local streams. Every October, 100 Chinook salmon eggs (provided by Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife) are hatched in an aquarium in the school library. The alevins (baby fish) are cared for by a team of fourth and fifth grade students under the tutelage of WCWC volunteer, Karen Rogers. The whole school eagerly watches the development of the alevins. Once the fish have reached fry stage (juvenile) they are released into the Rogue River.

Last year, WCWC received its first grant from the Ashland Community Food Store in support of the Salmon Egg Program. With this grant we were able to improve the aquarium and purchase related educational materials for the students. This year's Cow Creek

Foundation grant will be used to purchase additional educational materials for every student, upgrade the aquarium system to include refrigeration and reimburse volunteers for gasoline and other expenses. Thanks to this new grant, we will also be able to expand the program to include field trips for students to see natural salmon spawning sites, as well as fish hatcheries.

This project is a partnership between WCWC, Williams Elementary School students and teachers and the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife. Together with the Cow Creek Umpqua Indian Foundation, the Ashland Community Food Store and our volunteers, we are excited to offer this community outreach program. This enables Williams Elementary School students to learn about native fish and healthy stream habitat. For more information about this and other watershed enhancement projects, please contact the Williams Creek Watershed Council at 541-846-9175.

Evelyn Roether • 541-846-7163