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THE STARRY SIDE

Winter constellations

BY GREELEY WELLS

Although it's been cold for months now, the summer triangle's last star Deneb (the top of the Northern Cross) is just setting in the NNW. It starts rising late in the summer, so it is still here for us to admire into fall and winter; it's such a beauty! Our old friend Orion is rising in the east with his accompanying constellations I've talked about each winter for years now. Look at my illustration, and you'll see Orion with his dog, Canis Major, coming up in the east. (When you look for Canis Major in the sky, you'll see his brightest star Sirius first, and then you will be able to piece together the dog's front legs; if it's really low you'll have to wait for the back leg and tail to rise.) Out ahead of Orion, you'll first find Taurus—that little "V"—and then that beautiful clump of stars

Procyon; you'll find Canis Minor above the big dog, almost aligned with Orion's two shoulder stars. Just to Procyon's right and (above Orion) are Polux and Castor, the two stars that form the Gemini Twins' heads. A few stars run down below them to suggest their bodies, and each (sort of) have feet very close to Orion. Further to the right is another bright star, Capella, which is part of Auriga the Charioteer. To my eye, Auriga is really a five-pointed kite shape (technically, he shares a star with Taurus). And if you've got a good dark sky, you'll notice that there are two small triangles in this 'kite's' edges, one at the upper right and one at the lower left, facing in opposite directions. No one ever seems to mention the smaller, dimmer triangle on the lower-left edge. However,



called the Pleiades, or the seven sisters. During January, February and March, these constellations move from easterly, to directly overhead, to westerly in the sky like clockwork. Having refreshed your memory with these cold visions, let's look at some "lesser" constellations close by and above this group.

Several interesting constellations are found in a row, above the row of Orion and his friends, and approximately parallel to his signature three-in-a-row belt. Canis Major, Orion's large dog whose heart is Sirius (the brightest star in the heavens), has a younger dog above him called, not surprisingly, the little dog or Canis Minor. He really has only one bright star,

the upper-right triangle just below Capella is supposed to be "the kids"—that is, baby goats! So really the Charioteer is a herdsman? A bit confusing... (In any case, to me these triangles are cool—I guess that's because I'm an artist and I like that design element.) The next constellation in this line, moving from left to right, is our old friend and hero Perseus, whose adventures we talked about in the autumn.

So this winter, you don't have to look far to add a new list of constellations to the ones you already know!

THE PLANETS

Jupiter has been rising higher and higher, and has now come over the top due



Greeley Wells

south and is working his way down farther and farther into the west until he disappears completely by the end of March. We have had a wonderful view of his closest pass to us, which he does every 12 years. There's a great opportunity to watch Jupiter dance with Mercury (you'll need binoculars) on March 13-16, as Mercury starts lower/right and moves up and above Jupiter. How far the planets can move in a day!

Venus is January's spectacular, high-and-bright, early-morning "star." During February and March she sinks lower in the east-southeast. The blinking star directly below Venus is Antaries.

Mercury starts January in the morning below and to the left of Venus, then drops into the morning sun during all of February. He comes up in the sunset low, so he's hard to see until March 15, when he's just to the right of bright Jupiter (as described above).

Mars is deep in the sunset and invisible all winter.

Saturn starts rising in the middle of the night, and is high in the dawn near Spica. (In February Spica is below Saturn.) March finds Saturn rising during twilight and quite high up by midnight, with Spica still below it.

OF SPECIAL NOTE

The equinox marks the start of spring, on March 20.

A special treat for you sunrise folks occurs on February 27-March 1, as a beautiful waxing crescent moon passes by Venus. This is a good opportunity to watch the motion of the moon for three nights in a row, with a reference point to help you track its movement.

Upcoming full moons occur on January 19 (called the Moon After Yule or the Old Moon); February 17 (the Wolf, Snow or Hunger Moon); and March 19 (the Lenten, Sap, Crow or Worm Moon).

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Note: For a personal story by greeley log on to our website at www.applegater.org, see Polio, an awakening: A personal story

Voices of the Applegate

SPRING CONCERT

March 20, 2011 at 3 pm

Voices of the Applegate, our community choir of about 30 singers, will resume rehearsals on January 5 at 7:00 pm in the Applegate Library Meeting Room. Everyone is invited to participate in the choir, and no auditions are required. A charge of \$50 covers the entire session of rehearsals plus the music scores. Some scholarships are available. Rehearsals will take place every Wednesday evening from January 5 until March 16 and the Spring Concert will be held on March 20 at the Applegate River Ranch House unless otherwise posted.

Our new director, Blake Weller, promises a fun-filled, inspiring concert to welcome in our spring for the year 2011. All are invited to attend. No admission is required, and refreshments will be available.

For more information call Joan Peterson, 541-846-6988

Webinar:

Diversifying Income Opportunities with Nontimber Forest Products

January 18, 2011 from 10:30 am to 11:30 am (PST)

<http://www.elearning.nnfp.org/>

Presented by Neil Schroeder and Tom Nygren, the Oregon Woodland Co-op, and Lita Buttolph, Institute for Culture and Ecology

This webinar will introduce participants to the Oregon Woodland Cooperative, and the co-op's efforts to help small woodland owners stay economically viable by collectively marketing high-quality, sustainably harvested local forest products. Neil Schroeder and Tom Nygren, current and past co-op presidents, will describe the co-op's current goals, development efforts, and projects to market nontimber forest products. Lita Buttolph of the Institute for Culture and Ecology will describe the support services, tools and resources currently being developed for small woodland owners interested in marketing nontimber forest products. Time will be allotted for questions and discussion.

To register, go to <http://www.elearning.nnfp.org/>. For more information, contact Lita Buttolph with the Institute for Culture and Ecology at lbuttolph@ifcae.org or 503-331-6681. For technical assistance with logging on and registering, contact Scott Bagley at the National Network of Forest Practitioners at scott@nnfp.org.