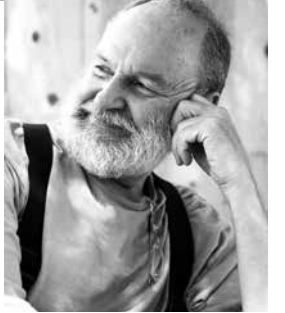


THE STARRY SIDE

Summer: A sky full of beauty, an earth full of pain



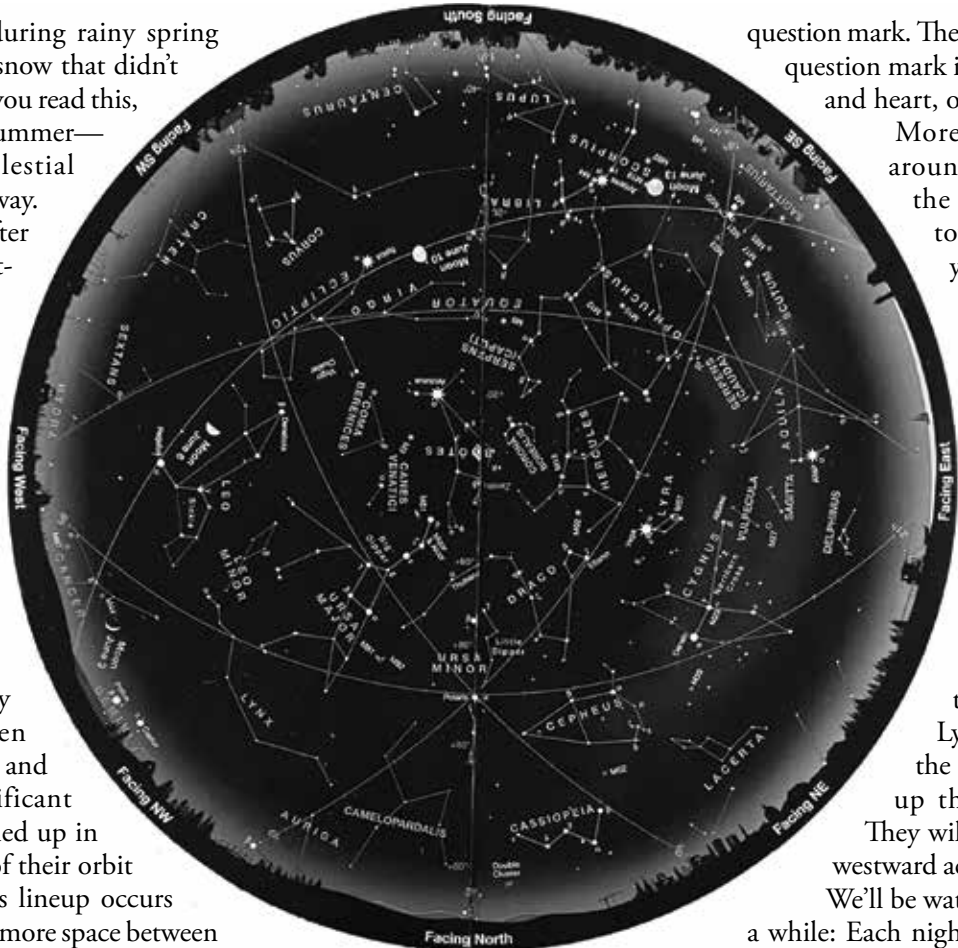
Greeley Wells

BY GREELEY WELLS

I'm writing this during rainy spring days, right after that snow that didn't last long. By the time you read this, I bet it will feel like summer—and a delightful celestial season will be under way.

On June 2, just after sunset above the west-northwest horizon, Castor and Pollux form a triangle with a thin, waxing crescent moon. And on June 4, if I can get you up before dawn, you'll see five "naked-eye" planets side by side in a long line, very low in the east and rising towards the south. Mercury is the dimmest, then Venus, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn! What's significant here is that they're lined up in a perfect illustration of their orbit around the sun! (This lineup occurs again, but with a little more space between the planets, on June 24.) The planets are usually much more spread out along the 360 degrees of their paths around the sun; it's rare that they all are so close and so many together. Don't forget that we are one of them too!

That planetary lineup makes an exciting opening act for a beautiful summer sky. Face north and you'll see that the Big



Sky & Telescope (skyandtelescope.org).

Dipper, which stood on its tail (the handle) last season, has climbed up and over the North Star, Polaris, and is upside down, with its tail is pointing up as it goes down in the west. Behind the Big Dipper, to the south a bit, you'll find Leo the Lion with that bright dot marking a backwards

question mark. The dot is Regulus, and the question mark is really the lion's mane and heart, of course.

More bright stars are all around! Follow the arc of the Big Dipper's handle toward the south, and you'll come to Arcturus, in the constellation Boötes. ("Follow the arc to Arcturus," as the old saying goes.) In the northeast is an even brighter star, Deneb, the top of the Northern Cross. Due east rises Altar, the middle of three stars forming Aquila the eagle. And the brightest is Vega, in Lyra and further above in the east. These three make up the Summer Triangle. They will keep moving up and westward across the sky all season. We'll be watching all this for quite a while: Each night the whole show will move about the width of a fist, held out at arm's length, farther and farther in a long southerly arc to the western horizon.

Gazing up at all this celestial beauty, let's not forget the pickle we are in down here on earth. My hope is that all of us—all individuals, corporations, politicians, and governments—will start taking some strong actions to reverse climate change

by half before 2030. According to climate-change experts, this is a deadline we can't miss, or we will start an unstoppable free fall into a future that will be the "gift" we give to our children and theirs. Let's choose instead to give them the gift of beautiful night skies for generations to come.

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— OF NOTE —

June 21 is the longest day of the year, the solstice, and the official start of summer.

Delta Aquariids meteor shower: Watch late July through early August, low in the sky near dawn. The maximum hourly rate can reach 15 to 20 meteors in a dark sky with no moon.

Perseids meteor shower: On August 13 there will be a bright moon up during the Perseids' peak, I'm sorry to say. But pick moonless times, and you will see some meteors. Look near Cassiopeia in the north—below the North Star and across from the Big Dipper.

The planets

Mercury is in the dawn in June, not visible in July, and then back in the dusk in August.

Venus is in June's midnight sky, then in the dawn in July and August.

Mars and Jupiter are visible after midnight all three months.

Saturn shows up after midnight in June and July, and all night in August.

Got News?

The *Applegater* welcomes submissions!

We're your newspaper and want to share your news with readers throughout the Applegate Valley watershed's many neighborhoods. What's going on around you? Let us know! Send your write-up and photos to gater@applegater.org. Thanks! See you in the *Applegater*....

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