

## March 2007

10:00 p.m. on March 1  
10:00 p.m. on March 15  
9:00 p.m. on April 1

**To use this chart:** hold the chart in front of you and turn it so the direction you are facing is at the bottom of the chart.

- **Bright Stars**
- **Medium Bright Stars**
- **Faint Stars**

**Scan the sky with binoculars:** the darker the sky, the better.

• **Open Star Clusters:**

- M-44 - The Beehive
- M-45 - The Pleiades
- "Double Cluster" between Perseus and Cassiopeia
- The Hyades form the face of Taurus
- Coma Berenices is a star cluster and a constellation

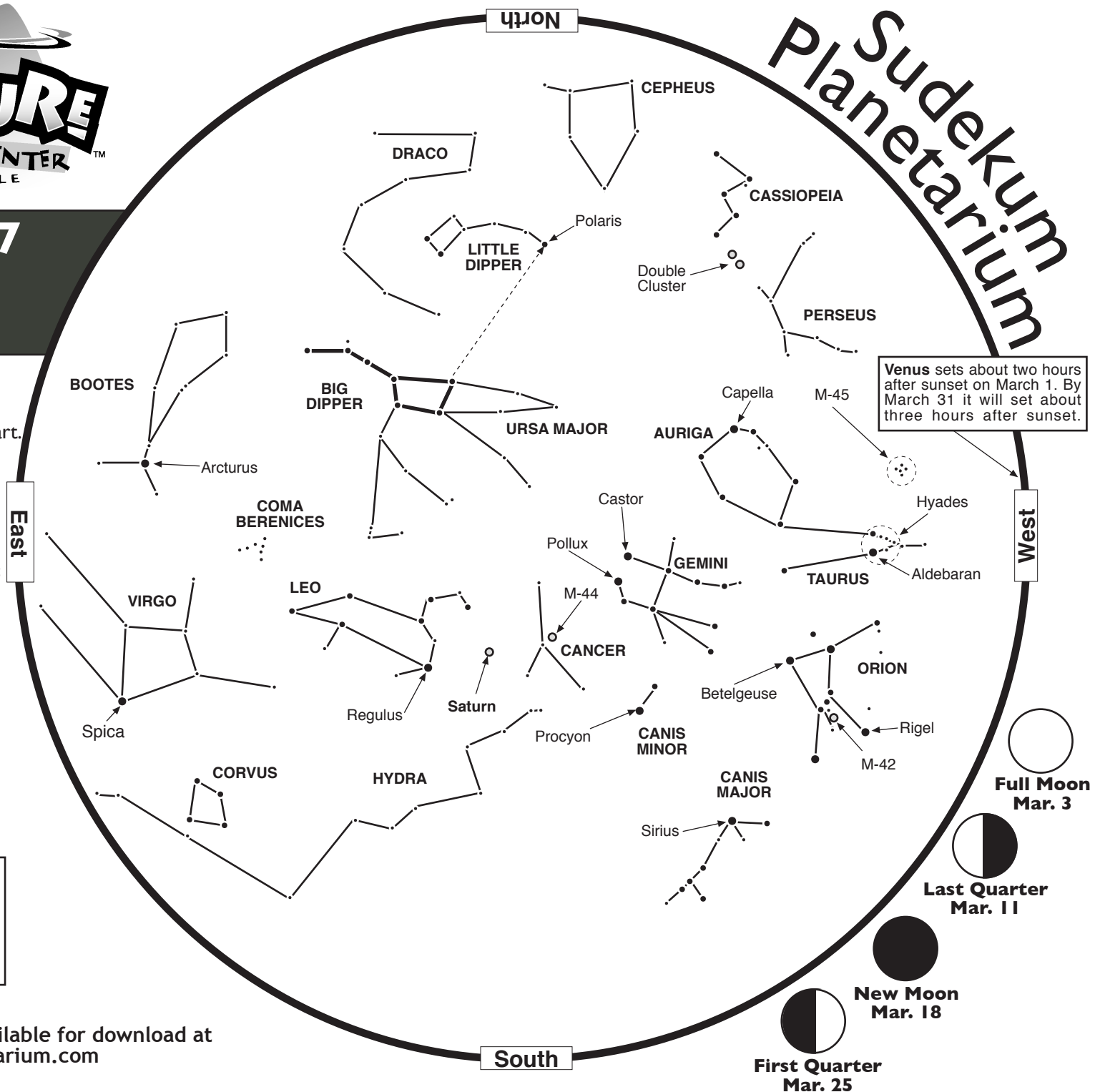
• **A Nebula:**

- M-42 - the Orion Nebula

From Nashville:

	Sunrise	Sunset
March 1	6:18 AM	5:42 PM
March 15	6:58 AM	6:54 PM
April 1	6:34 AM	7:09 PM

FREE monthly star charts are available for download at [www.SudekumPlanetarium.com](http://www.SudekumPlanetarium.com)





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### Looking at Leo

March not only comes in like a lion, it comes in WITH a lion! **Leo the lion** is visible to the east in early evenings throughout March. The head and mane of the lion are represented by a group of stars that looks something like a backwards question mark. Other stargazers imagine the top hook of a coat hanger, or a sickle in this group of stars. The "dot" at the bottom of the question mark is **Regulus**, the brightest star in Leo. It marks the heart of the lion. Translated from Latin, "Regulus" means "the little king," which is an appropriate name to go along with the regal "king of the jungle."

East of the lion's head is a small triangle of stars which mark the lion's rear leg and long tail. Some older star maps went even further and included the faint cluster of stars called **Coma Berenices** as the furry tip of the lion's tail. But today, Coma Berenices is considered a separate constellation. Interestingly, Coma Berenices means "Bernice's Hair", and is part of another mythological tale.

Just above the lion is another springtime favorite, the **Big Dipper**. As famous as the Dipper is, it's not always easily visible from our latitude. During the autumn, it stays hidden near the northern horizon, only to emerge in the wee hours of the morning. But in the spring, the Dipper is easy to find high in the evening sky.

Once you've found the Dipper, you can use

the two stars and the end of the bowl to lead you to **Polaris**, also known as the **North Star**. Polaris is not a particularly bright star, but it does remain fixed in the sky throughout the night and throughout the year, always right above due North. When you face the North Star, you're facing due north.

### More March Skies

Look to the west on a clear night just after sunset, and you'll see a very bright point of light. Aside from the Moon, it'll be the first thing you see in the sky as it gets dark. It's not a streetlight or an airplane or a satellite or a UFO... it's the planet **Venus**! Venus appears so bright because its thick atmosphere reflects the light of the Sun.

On **March 20**, look for a pretty pairing of Venus just above a slim crescent **Moon**. On **March 21**, the Moon will appear just above Venus.

Meanwhile, it looks like Leo the Lion is staring straight ahead at **Saturn**. Positioned just west of the lion's head, Saturn is very bright, a great target for small telescopes.

### Springing Ahead... A Little Earlier

If you're used to springing your clocks ahead one hour on the first Sunday in April, be warned! Starting this year, **Daylight Saving Time** begins on the second Sunday of March. This year, that's **March 11th**. Because of the same new rules passed into federal law in 2005, Daylight Saving Time now officially ends on the first Sunday in November. As usual, the times you see listed on the front of the star chart take the time change into account.

Speaking of time, **March 21** marks the **Vernal Equinox**, the first day of spring in the northern hemisphere (and the first day of fall in the southern hemisphere.) When you hear the word 'equinox,' think 'equal.' The Sun spends an equal amount above and below the horizon - day and night are the same length.

You've probably noticed how the Sun is now setting later than it did during the height of winter. As we move toward summer, the Sun will rise earlier and set later each day, all the way until the **Summer Solstice** on **June 21**. Then the days will begin to shorten again, past the **Autumnal Equinox** on **September 23**, and all the way to the shortest day of the year, the **Winter Solstice** on **December 22**. A few months later, and it's back to spring!

### Is Pluto A Planet?

Dr. David Weintraub of Vanderbilt University will present a talk on the planetary history of Pluto on **Astronomy Day, May 5, 2007**. Dr. Weintraub has recently published a book called "Is Pluto a Planet," exploring that very question. Obviously, with the International Astronomical Union's recent decision to demote Pluto, there has been a lot of interest in the definition of a "planet". Along the way to defining planethood, Weintraub touches upon major astronomical discoveries ranging from Uranus, Neptune, and Ceres to the Kuiper Belt and beyond.

May 5, 2007 is also the date of the next **Free Public Star Party**, in front of Adventure Science Center. Members of the **Barnard Seyfert Astronomical Society** will be on hand with telescopes and more. Venus and Saturn will be up in the sky, along with many spring constellations. Stay tuned for more details about our annual Astronomy Day celebration!

### Construction Update

The Planetarium staff is starting to suffer from dome withdrawal. Our beloved planetarium was torn down six weeks ago, and this is the longest time in **MANY MANY** years either of us have gone without a round room.

The building itself disappeared pretty quickly. It has taken longer to prepare the site for construction. Foundation work was begun in late February. Hopefully, it won't be long before the new building will begin to rise from the rocks. Visit [www.SudekumPlanetarium.com](http://www.SudekumPlanetarium.com) for new picture and video.

*For information about programs and events at the Sudekum Planetarium and Adventure Science Center, visit [www.SudekumPlanetarium.com](http://www.SudekumPlanetarium.com)*

*For current night sky information, call AstroLine at 615-401-5092.*