



# Sudekum Planetarium

## April 2008

10:00 p.m. on April 1  
 9:00 p.m. on April 15  
 8:00 p.m. on May 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:**

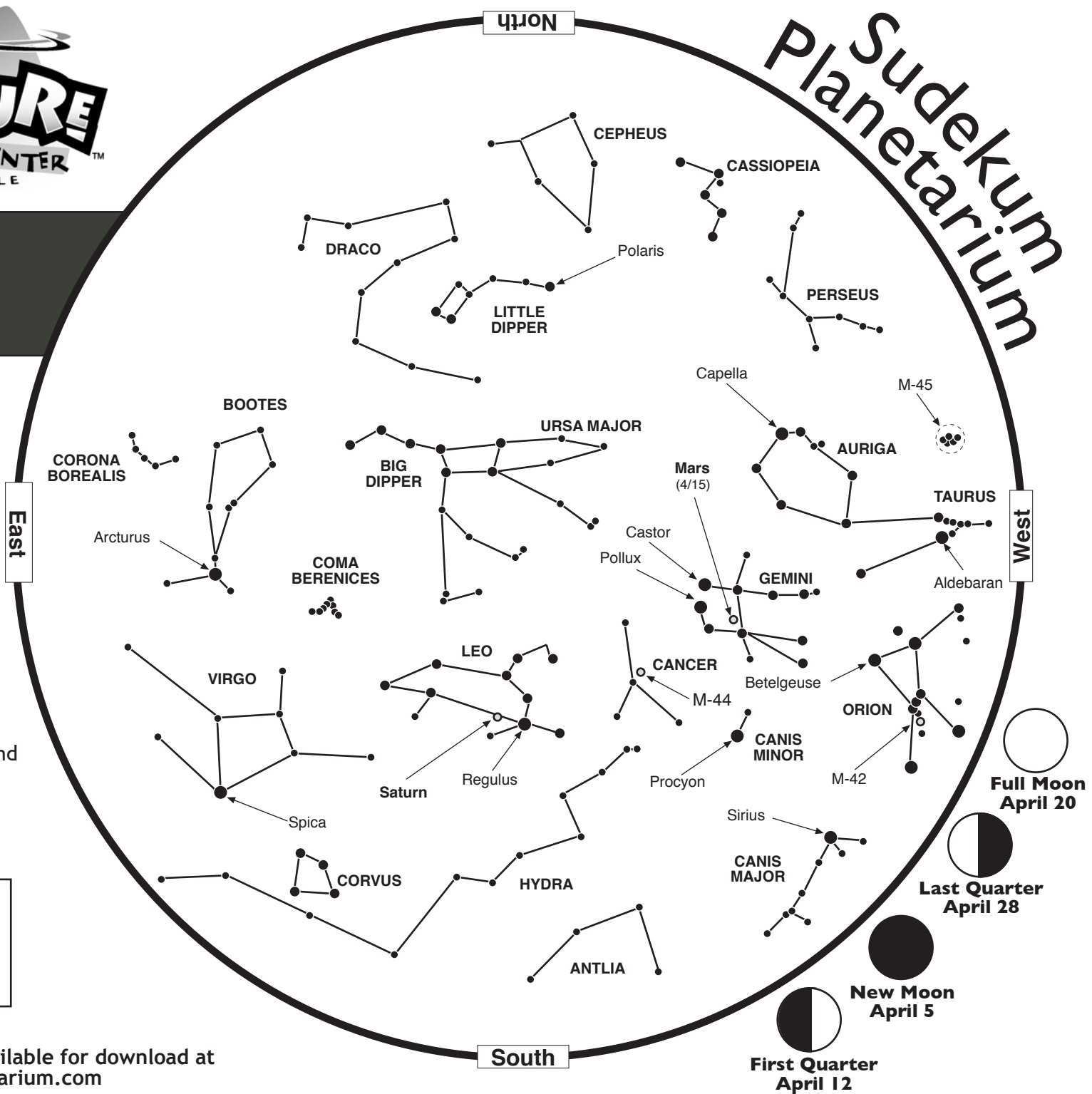
- M-44 - The Beehive
- M-45 - The Pleiades
- Coma Berenices is a star cluster and a constellation.

• **Nebulas:**

- M-42 - The Orion Nebula

From Nashville:

	Sunrise	Sunset
April 1	6:33 AM	7:09 PM
April 15	6:13 AM	7:21 PM
May 1	5:54 AM	7:35 PM



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



## April 2008

### April Showers and Spring Stargazing

Any night you get clear night skies at this time of year, make sure to run outside and enjoy the view. The stars of spring aren't quite as bright as those you see in the winter, and you won't see much of the Milky Way, either. Still, there are still many nice sights for the casual observer.

One of the most famous star patterns in the entire night sky is the **Big Dipper**. It's visible year round from middle Tennessee, but the best time for an early evening view is in the spring. Take this star chart with you and follow these easy steps.

1. Go outside as the sky gets dark, after 8:30 PM., and face **north**. If you are not sure which direction is north, face the direction the sun sets, and north will be on your right.

2. Hold the **star chart** so that north is at the bottom of the chart. (Yes, upside down!) The stars at the bottom of the chart represent what you should see in the sky in front of you. The stars at the top of the map will be behind you.

3. Look for the Big Dipper high in the northern sky. The stars are bright enough that you should be able to see most of them even if you're near the light pollution of the city. If you're having trouble, try to find a slightly darker spot to observe from.

Just keep in mind that at this time of year, the Dipper will appear upside down, pouring out its contents onto the northern horizon.

The stars that make up the Big Dipper are actually part of a larger constellation called **Ursa Major the great bear**. The Big Dipper is more widely known because its stars stand out, compared to the fainter stars in the rest of the

bear. If there's any light pollution or a bright Moon in the sky, the bear will be too faint to see.

Once you're done with the dipper, turn around and face **south**. Turn the star chart so you can read south at the bottom. (Right side up again!) High in the southern sky, about the same height above the horizon as the Big Dipper, is **Leo the lion**. Compare the sky to the chart, and look for the hook shape that marks the head of the lion. **Regulus** is the bright star that indicates the lion's regal heart.

Very near Regulus is the planet **Saturn**. Saturn has a distinct yellow color and doesn't twinkle like the stars do.

Don't forget to watch for the **Moon**. Our closest neighbor in space moves very quickly through the sky from night to night. This month let the Moon be your guide as it passes by some other fascinating sky sights.

Just after sunset on **April 8**, look for a thin crescent Moon near the **Pleiades star cluster (M-45)**. The Pleiades is a very pretty sight through binoculars.

On the evening of **April 11**, the Moon will be next to a pale pink dot: **Mars**. Mars isn't very exciting to look at right now because it's currently far from the Earth and getting further by the day. Our next good close-up view of Mars won't be until January 2010.

For a challenge, try to spot the **Beehive star cluster (M-44)** near the Moon on **April 13**. The Beehive appears as a fuzzy collection of stars in binoculars, but light from the Moon will make observing it difficult. Come back to this location in the sky on a night when the Moon isn't so bright and look for the Beehive again.

On **April 14**, the Moon will pass close by Saturn and Regulus.

While you're at it, don't forget to check out the Moon with binoculars. It's a beautiful sight any time of year!

### Star Parties

Join the Barnard Seyfert Astronomical Society at Ridgefield in Edwin Warner Park for a **FREE**

public star party, from **8 to 10 PM, Saturday, April 12**. If the weather's clear, telescopes will be set up for everyone to get a good look at the Moon, Saturn, and other springtime highlights.

If the skies are cloudy or worse, the event will be cancelled. Please consult the Sudekum Planetarium web site or call **Astroline** at (615) 401-5102 before traveling to the observing site.

The next star party after this is scheduled for **May 3, from 8:30 to 10:30 PM** at the **Visitor's Center at Longhunter State Park**.

Finally, mark **May 17** on your calendar for **Astronomy Day from 10 AM to 4 PM**, followed by a **star party from 8:30 to 10:30 PM**. Both events are at the **Adventure Science Center**.

Updates and more information is always available at [www.SudekumPlanetarium.com](http://www.SudekumPlanetarium.com)

### T minus Three Months

It's hard to believe fifteen months have passed since the Sudekum Planetarium was closed and torn down. But we've been busy - anyone who thought we were getting an eighteen month sabbatical was sadly mistaken!

The Planetarium staff has been busy presenting classroom programs and preparing for the future. Along with the rest of the Adventure Science Center staff, we've spent endless hours planning for the new planetarium and the **Space Chase** exhibit wing.

The planetarium dome was completed in early March. As we write, the carpet and seats are being completed. Other technicians are busy installing the sound system and dome lighting effects. Soon, engineers from GOTO Inc. of Japan will arrive in Nashville to install our brand new **Chiron** star projector. Fulldome digital technology from Evans and Sutherland Digital Theater will be installed in early April.

All these systems have to be installed, aligned, and integrated, and the Sudekum Planetarium staff has to learn how to use it all. We've got a lot of work to do, but we couldn't be happier. It won't be long before we can welcome you back to our starry skies.