



Sudekum Planetarium

May 2010
 10:00 p.m. on May 1
 9:00 p.m. on May 15
 8:00 p.m. on June 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.

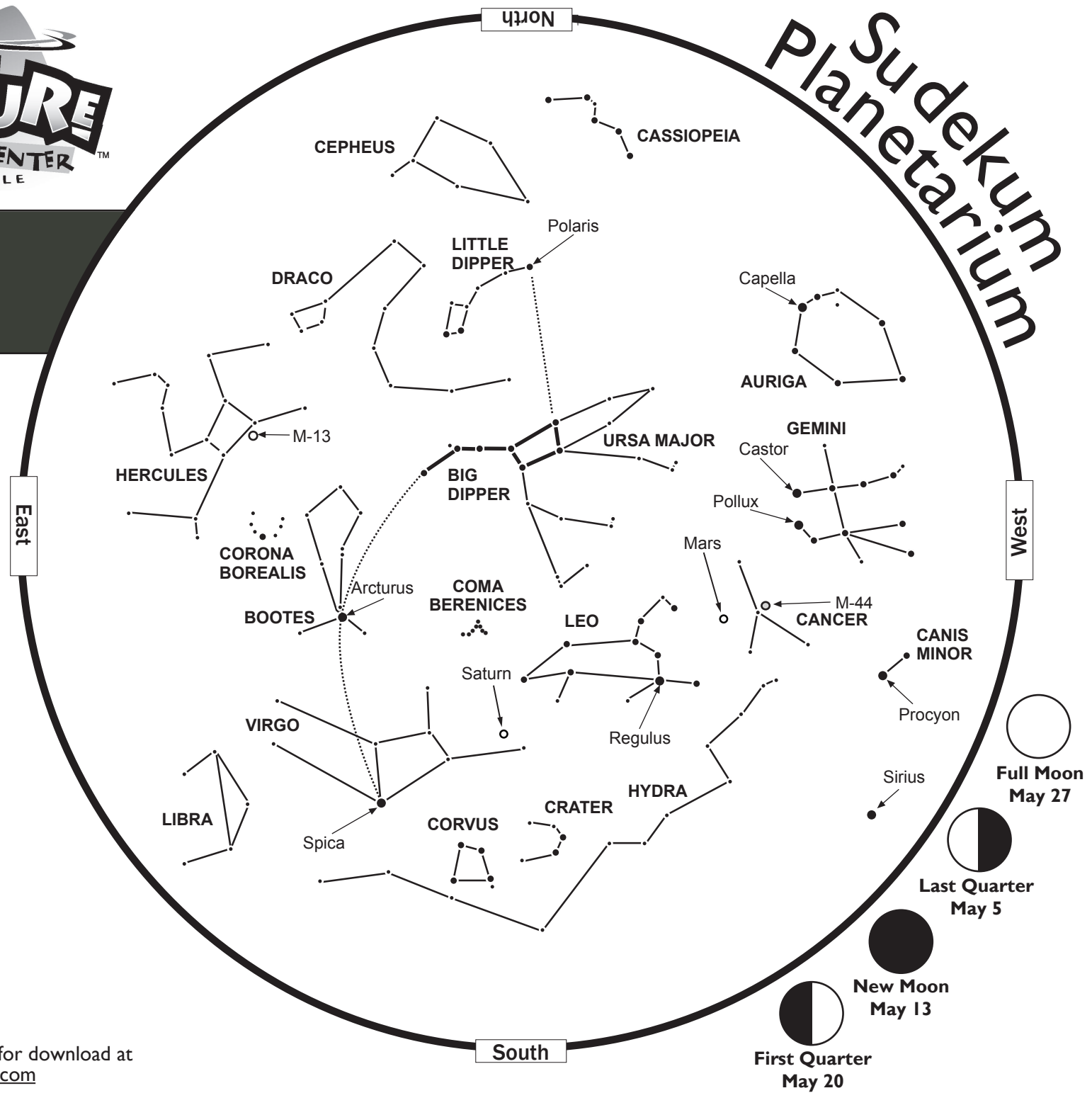
- **Bright Stars**
- **Medium Bright Stars**
- **Faint Stars**

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

M-13: The Hercules star cluster
 M-44: The Beehive star cluster

Coma Berenices is a star cluster and a constellation.

From Nashville:	Sunrise	Sunset
May 1	5:54 AM	7:35 PM
May 15	5:41 AM	7:46 PM
June 1	5:31 AM	7:59 PM



FREE monthly star charts are available for download at www.SudekumPlanetarium.com

THE NEW SUDEKUM PLANETARIUM

JUDITH PAYNE TURNER THEATER

May 2010 Home

To be honest, it's a little hard to write about the stars when our focus right now is here on the ground, as the flood waters have just now begun to recede from our city of Nashville.

Thankfully the planetarium staff, our dome, and most of our friends and family are safe and relatively dry. We consider ourselves extremely fortunate. (It's a sobering thought to realize that our old planetarium theater, demolished in 2007, would *not* have fared as well.)

In any case, please consider helping our community with a contribution to the Community Foundation of Middle Tennessee (cfmt.org) or becoming a volunteer with Hands On Nashville (hon.org).

That's One Useful Dipper

One of the best celestial guideposts on a winter's night, **Orion the Hunter**, has finally disappeared from the evening sky, only to return in the late fall. To take Orion's place, another group of stars is now high overhead in the north to help us find our way, the famous **Big Dipper**.

Poke a hole in the bottom of the Big Dipper's bowl to let the water drip out onto the back of **Leo the lion**. The side of Leo facing west resembles the hook of a coat hanger or a backwards question mark, but this group of stars actually represents the head of the lion. The dot at the bottom of the question mark, **Regulus**, marks Leo's heart.

Currently in front of Leo's face is the red planet **Mars**. Bright earlier in the year, Mars is now becoming fainter every day because the distance between Earth and Mars is increasing as the planets move in their orbits.

Look below and slightly to the east of the lion's tail to find the planet **Saturn**. Check it out with a small telescope to see its famous rings. At this time, the rings look like short, bright lines sticking out on either side of the planet because we are seeing the rings from nearly edge on. Over the coming year, the rings will appear brighter and more prominent as our viewing angle changes.

Go back to the Big Dipper, and follow the curve of its handle which points to the reddish-orange star **Arcturus in Bootes the herdsman**. Continue along that same curved path to find **Spica in Virgo the Virgin**. Both of these stars stand out but are part of constellations that are otherwise faint and difficult to see.

For its final and most famous trick, the Big Dipper will direct you to **Polaris, the North Star**. Draw a line connecting the two stars on the outside of the cup of the bowl. Extend that line out the top of the bowl and you will find Polaris at the tail end of the **Little Dipper**. Face Polaris, and you are facing due North, no matter the time of night.

Planets Morning and Night

High in the east, Leo the lion is almost bookended by the planets Mars and Saturn. While these two planets are fairly easy to locate, a third planet in the evening sky practically reaches out and grabs for your attention.

Look to the west just after sunset on a clear night, and brilliant **Venus** is a spectacular sight. Venus will be the first bright point of light you'll see as the sky begins to darken and will dominate the western sky well into September.

On the evening of **May 15**, the slim **crescent Moon** will be positioned just below and to the right of Venus. On **May 16**, the Moon will appear just above and to the right of Venus. Impress your friends and neighbors by identifying the bright "star" near the Moon on those evenings.

Only the truly dedicated will be up before sunrise to catch a glimpse of giant **Jupiter**. The solar system's largest planet rises above the eastern horizon before 4:00 am in early May and just after 2:00 am at the end of the month. Allow about an hour for Jupiter to rise above the trees and buildings that may block your view.

Jupiter will be very bright and makes a nice target for a small telescope, which may reveal as many as four of its largest moons.

If you're like most people and not keen on getting up before the Sun to see Jupiter, just wait! Jupiter will rise a little earlier each day. By mid-August you'll be able to see Jupiter well before your bed-time!

Upcoming Star Parties

The next **FREE** public star party is set for **Saturday, May 15** from 8:30 to 10:30 at the Visitor Information Center at Longhunter State Park. Join us as members of the **Barnard Seyfert Astronomical Society** set up telescopes to provide you with views of Saturn, Mars, the Moon, and much more.

As we write this, we don't know the condition of the park due to flood waters, or if it will be ready in time for the star party. Keep an eye on our web site at SudekumPlanetarium.com. We'll be sure to post information as soon as we know more.

If the weather is cloudy, the star party will be cancelled. If the weather is questionable, call **AstroLine** at (615) 401-5092 or check our web site before traveling. On our web site, you'll also find driving directions and a list of useful star party tips.

Women Do Astronomy

The May meeting of the Barnard-Seyfert Astronomical Society will be held at 7:30 pm on Thursday May 20 at Adventure Science Center. JanaRuth Ford, Assistant Professor of Astronomy at MTSU, will highlight how women have made MANY significant contributions to astronomy over the years.

This meeting is free and open to the public. Program topics vary throughout the year, so check www.bsasnashville.com for details about the club and upcoming events.

Our Thanks

Thanks to the Barnard-Seyfert Astronomical Society and the Austin-Peay State University Physics Club for their assistance with Astronomy Day on April 17! We couldn't have done it without you!